‘Invaded by Daughters of Eve’: Women Playing American Football, 1890-1960

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge I confirm that the work in this thesis is my original work undertaken for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities, De Montfort University. I confirm that no material of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or qualification at any other university. I also declare that parts of this thesis have been submitted for publications and conferences.

Abstract

This thesis examines the history of women playing American football in the United States in the period 1890-1960, a sport that from its very beginning was a means for men to demonstrate their manliness and masculinity. The thesis is primarily a media study which uses an extensive range of newspaper reports to build a picture of the many ways in which women accessed the sport and the response that the media had to their involvement. Archival research complements this media response and provides additional examples, especially on the educational uses of American football.

The thesis challenges the narrative that women participated in the sport only as spectators and cheerleaders. Women's involvement has been wide-ranging, both geographically and in the ways in which they played the game. The work contends that medical experts, educators, and others' views on gender and femininity shaped women's participation, yet women frequently contravened social norms to participate in this hyper-masculine sport. Despite these women seemingly 'invading' the masculine space of football, the media primarily responded positively and frequently praised these young women.

The work's thematic approach analyses the many ways in which women played the sport and considers the following themes: playing for fun; playing alongside and against male players; women's football in educational settings; participation in professional leagues; and playing for charitable purposes. Unlike many women's sporting histories, this thesis does not focus solely on competitive sport. It also considers participation for fun as well as part of physical education programmes, creating a rounded picture of women's involvement in the sport across seventy years.

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List of Illustrations

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Title
AAGPBL	All-American Girls Professional Baseball League
AAU	Amateur Athletic Union
AP	Associated Press
APEA	American Physical Education Association
BMI	Body Mass Index
IHSAA	Indiana High School Athletic Association
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IWFL	Independent Women's Football League
JAMA	*Journal of the American Medical Association*
NFL	National Football League
NWFL	National Women's Football League
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UNH	University of New Hampshire

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Introduction

In a 2017 press conference, Jourdan Rodrigue, the *Charlotte Observer*'s beat writer for the Carolina Panthers, questioned the team's quarterback, Cam Newton, about the routes run by wide receiver Devin Funchess. Newton's response of 'it's funny to hear a female talk about routes' received widespread condemnation, including from the National Football League (NFL) itself.[1] He offended many people in dismissing the idea that women might know something about route running. It is not surprising that he lacked this knowledge, given the absence of public awareness of women's historical participation in the sport. The academic historiography of American football is extensive, but a coherent analysis of the history of female players is absent.[2] This dearth of academic focus has no doubt impacted public awareness.

Evidence shows that women frequently played American football in many settings between 1890 and 1960. The earliest examples of women playing began in the 1890s, while women's participation reduced by 1960. Women across the United States played football, although no real "hotbed" or dominant area existed; yet a widespread belief that women have a limited, or even no, history in the sport exists. For example, John Pettegrew, writing in *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920*, in 2007, argued that '[f]ootball's requirement for … bulk and muscle mass, along with its close association with war, has kept women from playing the sport for well over one hundred

[1] The Guardian, 'Cam Newton disses female reporter with sexist remark at press conference', 5 October 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/oct/04/cam-newton-sexist-press-conference-routes (accessed 31 October 2018).

[2] John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Dave Revsine, *The Opening Kick-Off: The Tumultuous Birth of a Football Nation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014); Robert Peterson, *Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Gerhard Falk, *Football and American Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Mark Bernstein, *Football: The Ivy League Origins of an American Obsession* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

years.'[3] Amber Roessner notes that 'women who did compete in the more "masculine" sporting events were often condemned'.[4] Analysing newspaper coverage not only brings this hidden history to light but also challenges these opinions. An investigation into the wide variety of ways that women played the sport, including for their entertainment, for the enjoyment of others, in educational settings, and as a result of entrepreneurial activity, results in a history that focuses on both recreational participation and formal competition. Fiona Skillen notes that informal examples are 'equally important' for historians as formal participation in order to build an increasingly detailed picture of the various ways in which women accessed sport.[5] From here on, references to 'football' are for the American code, 'soccer' for the Association code and 'rugby' for references to league and union.

The history of women's football is a story about their access to the sport, and about the opportunities and constraints that they faced. As such, it explores shifting attitudes — medical, pedagogical, social, moral, religious, and more — and how they played out in women's sporting lives. For example, educators' and medical authorities' concerns about women playing football changed between 1890 and 1960 and resulted in modifications to the sport to make it suitable for women. Similarly, changing attitudes about the morality of women taking part in physical activity in public impacted upon their opportunities to play football in front of spectators throughout the decades. How the media and other agencies maintained and, at times, undermined stereotypes and orthodoxies contributed to the debate around the suitability of women playing football. Thus, a key priority in this work is the analysis of the media response to these female

[3] John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2007), 130.
[4] Amber Roessner, 'The New Woman as Athlete: Coverage of the Sporting Woman in the Gilded Age Press', in *After the War: The Press in a Changing America, 1865-1900*, ed. David Sachsman (New York: Routledge, 2017), n.p.
[5] Fiona Skillen, *Women, Sport and Modernity in Interwar Britain* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 14.

players. Mark Dyreson notes that '[h]istorians of sport seek to explain how American sport illuminates larger issues in the nation's development … [including] the role of class, race and gender'.[6] In this research, American football acts as a lens to explore class and gender in the United States. Media coverage sometimes reflected social attitudes regarding women playing highly physical sport by highlighting their attractiveness or ridiculing them. However, newspapers' frequent praise of players contradicted broader social attitudes in many cases. Similarly, conformist norms about gender and sexual identities informed press coverage of the sport. For example, the extent to which reports focused on women's heteronormativity, through references to their looks and personal lives, demonstrated how concerned newspaper editors were about these players. The vast majority of football games that women played between 1890 and 1960 were not highly competitive, and they often epitomised broader moral and pedagogical attitudes about female competition, especially in educational settings.

The primary rationale behind this project is to disprove the misconception that women have not played football, but other broader implications are also important. Patricia Vertinsky noted in 1994 that '[b]y providing a sense both of their origins and the possibility of effecting change, women's history provides an essential tool for analysing the current difficulties of women'.[7] Understanding the history of women playing football can contribute to ameliorating the current problems that women face in the sport, exemplified by the lack of knowledge demonstrated by current NFL players like Newton. The masculinity associated with the sport and the common historical expectation for women to maintain their femininity while playing football still resonate today with organisations like the Extreme Football League. This 'all-woman contact

[6] Mark Dyreson, 'The United States of America', in *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, ed. Stephen Pope and John Nauright (London: Routledge, 2009), 608.
[7] Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 2.

football league (7 on 7) originated from a 2004 ' "Lingerie Bowl" pay-per-view event' in which, as the name suggests, the players did not wear standard-issue football uniforms.[8] Increasing public awareness of the longevity of female participation in the sport can help inspire young women and demonstrate that football is a sport in which they can participate. Speaking autoethnographically, my involvement in football in the UK, which began in an educational setting in 2008, has often felt like an oddity, but having a greater appreciation of the women who have come before me helps ground my participation in a broader history and makes it feel less unusual. Therefore, the history of female football players can go some way to normalise women's involvement in this hyper-masculine sport.

In 1912, a subheading in the *Nashville Tennessean* about a match between two female teams in Chicago stated: 'Every Realm of Sport Has Now Been Invaded by Daughters of Eve'.[9] The term 'invaded' appears in reports of women playing football from the 1890s through to the 1940s, and the word makes links to football's development at a time when a 'romantic memory of the Civil War' emerged. Universities dedicated their stadiums to fallen soldiers, and 'southern schools adopted team names and uniforms explicitly venerating the Confederacy'.[10] Football became an equivalent to war. The reference to Eve, as Mike Huggins notes, 'was a powerful discursive motif, associated with temptation, sin, distraction, or woman as a subordinate helpmate'.[11] Thus, in making this reference, the newspaper suggested that the women who played football were morally corrupt as well as inferior to male players. Numerous headlines from

[8] Charlene Weaving, 'It is Okay to Play as Long as You Wear Lingerie (or Skimpy Bikinis): A Moral Evaluation of the Lingerie Football League and its Rebranding', *Sport in Society* 17, no. 6 (2014): 757.
[9] 'Women Have At Last Taken Up Football', *Nashville Tennessean*, 31 December 1912, 10.
[10] Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 139.
[11] Mike Huggins, '"And Now, Something for the Ladies": Representations of Women's Sport in Cinema Newsreels 1918-1939', *Women's History Review* 16, no. 5 (2007): 691.

across our period screamed about invasions: ‘Hi Girls Invade Football World’ (1922), ‘Ladies of the Gridiron: A He-Man Sport Suffers a Powder Puff Invasion’ (1940), ‘Kansas Girls Invade Another Male Domain’ (1943), ‘Texas U Co-eds Invade Another Male Field’ (1949).[12] The ‘invasion’ metaphor also indicates that some reporters believed that women were encroaching on a masculine domain and that their participation was not welcome. Michael Oriard states that ‘football derived much of its cultural power from being emphatically, unquestionably masculine’, leaving some journalists to perceive women’s involvement to be an invasion.[13] An element of this work is to understand the extent to which newspapers viewed women as invaders, and how this perspective impacted their participation.

While women have been playing football since the 1890s, few academics have considered it a viable avenue for research. For example, in 1993, Oriard suggested topics for further research on the sport. Amongst these areas of study, he considered a continuation of tracing the various football narratives of teamwork and coaching, as well as the violence and the perceived ‘necessary roughness’ of the sport.[14] While he made brief mention of gendered narratives, Oriard did not consider women as players as an area of research. Similarly, Ronald Smith, in 2008, included an extensive list of possible areas for further football research, including the role of women physical educators and their influence on college athletics, but he made no mention of women football players or any other roles that they may have held.[15] The absence of scholarly work is probably because of the continued belief that women did not play football in the

[12] ‘Hi Girls Invade Football World’, *Maui News*, 15 December 1922, 5; ‘Ladies of the Gridiron: A He-Man Sport Suffers a Powder Puff Invasion’, *Click*, January 1940, 32; ‘Kansas Girls Invade Another Male Domain’, *Daily Boston Globe*, 26 September 1943, B24; ‘Texas U Co-eds Invade Another Male Field’, *Pampa Daily News* (Pampa, TX), 5 October 1949, 7.
[13] Oriard, *King Football*, 356.
[14] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 281.
[15] Ronald Smith, ‘Intercollegiate Athletics/Football History at the Dawn of a New Century’, *Journal of Sport History* 29, no. 2 (2008): 237.

sport's early years. In response to this gap in popular and academic discourse, this work aims to establish the missing narrative of women playing football and evaluate the way that the media presented the players within the context of underpinning attitudes. These case studies reveal that women have always played the sport despite their lack of inclusion in traditional accounts. This research will seek to answer three key questions:

1) How extensive was women's participation as players in football between 1890 and 1960?
2) How did the media cover women playing football between 1890 and 1960?
3) How did women playing football in these years conform to wider views on gender?

Answers to these questions reveal the influences that impacted women's participation and the responses that their involvement provoked. Furthermore, the research illuminates the stories of these groundbreaking women and demonstrates that these players frequently found significant support for their attempts to play this hyper-masculine sport.

Historiography

The history of women playing football relates to many strands of historical writing, including the historiographies of football, education, gender, and sport. In order to locate this project in relation to these traditions, this section evaluates the broader literature on women's sport in the United States, football's history, and women's educational history. It explores the influences on such work and the themes that have emerged from these academic writings and sets the scene for how this project contributes to them.

Scholarship on women's physical activity came after earlier work on other aspects of women's lives such as family, labour, and, especially, politics and suffrage. As Ellen DuBois notes, 'veterans of the suffrage movement … thought the preservation of history would contribute to "the cause." '[16] Consequently, prominent early women's rights activists and suffragists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper produced the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage* between 1881 and 1922, and wrote some of the earliest women's histories.[17] The archives that these women 'created, the books they wrote in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s, awaited — even enticed — feminists of the 1960s and 1970s to become historians of women'.[18] For example, Anne Firor Scott states that in the mid-1960s a group of mostly young female historians '[s]parked about equally by feminism and the burgeoning interest in social history … began to appear on the scene'.[19] Works that these academics produced, such as Gerda Lerner's *The Woman in American History* and Mary Ryan's 1975 *Womanhood in America from Colonial Times to the Present*, focused on women's diverse roles in society.[20] As Lerner herself noted in 1975, '[i]n the brief span of five years … American historians have begun to develop women's history as an independent field'.[21] *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New*

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[16] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 210.
[17] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. I 1848-1861* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. II 1861-1876* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1882); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. III 1876-1885* (New York: Charles Mann, 1886); Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. IV 1883-1900* (Indianapolis, IN: The Hollenbeck Press, 1902); Ida Husted Harper ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. V 1900-1920* (New York: J.J. Little & Ives, 1922); Ida Husted Harper ed., *History of Woman Suffrage: Vol. VI 1900-1920* (New York: J.J. Little & Ives, 1922).
[18] DuBois, *Woman Suffrage*, 211.
[19] Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), xxiii.
[20] Gerda Lerner, *The Woman in American History* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1971); Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975).
[21] Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges', *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1-2 (1975): 5.

Perspectives on the History of Women published in 1976, has contributions from several of these historians, including Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Linda Gordon, Barbara Welter, and Ann Douglas Wood.[22] Unlike the early women's histories, which were often biographies of notable suffragists, these new works focused on ordinary women's lives. However, these academics' emphasis on women's domestic roles, employment, political engagement, and the relative absence of an academic sports historiography at this time, ensured that these authors were not looking at sport.

Like the early histories of women, major movements both in and out of sport have influenced academic writing on women's physical activity. The earlier and more general histories of female physical activity date back to the mid-1970s, when women's physicality gained prominence through organisations such as the Women's Sports Foundation, which tennis player and equality advocate and activist Billie Jean King founded in 1974.[23] The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s also resulted in '[m]uch of what interest there is in the subject of women, sport, and leisure'.[24] J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park note that before the 1970s, studies 'dealing with women and their sports and recreations were virtually non-existent' with only a few biographies and 'relatively obscure dissertations about influential physical educationists'.[25] Early books dedicated to filling the gaps in this area of research are Helen Lenskyj's 1986 *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* and Mangan and Park's 1987 collection *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post*

[22] Mary Hartman and Lois Banner ed., *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976).
[23] Women's Sports Foundation, 'About Us', https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/about-us/ (accessed 22 July 2019).
[24] J. A. Mangan and Roberta Park, 'Introduction', in *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras*, ed. J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 2.
[25] Ibid., 1.

Industrial Eras.[26] More work has appeared since the mid-1990s as academics looked to explore this underrepresented group, including Jennifer Hargreaves' seminal 1994 *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports*.[27] Leslie Heywood and Sharon Dworkin note that the mid-1990s coincided with an increasing interest in female sport. They cite Nike's "If You Let Me Play" campaign to encourage women to take part in sport as the beginning of increasing public consciousness.[28] They also state that the 'shift from grudging mainstream acceptance to adulation, full iconic status … did not take place until 1996, "the Year of the Women" at the Olympics'.[29] It was also in 1996 that the National Basketball Association's Board of Governors approved the formation of the Women's National Basketball Association.[30] Increasing awareness of female athletes' capabilities appears to have led to a corresponding desire to know more about their history. Heywood and Dworkin refer to third-wave feminism in the 1990s as a 'stealth feminism that draws attention to key feminist issues and goals without provoking the knee-jerk social stigmas attached to the word *feminist*'.[31] Histories of women's sports, including football, fit this definition and highlight important issues without being overtly feminist.

Women's sporting opportunities are a focus for academic work, but this often centres on histories of individual activities and a narrow range of team sports. Games that physical educators and medical experts historically allowed women to play are common areas of research. For example, Lissa Smith's collection *Nike is a Goddess:*

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[26] Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986); Mangan and Park, *From Fair Sex to Feminism*.
[27] Jennifer Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[28] Leslie Heywood and Shari L. Dworkin, *Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 29.
[29] Ibid., xxi.
[30] N. Jeremi Dura, 'Hoop Dreams Deferred: The WNBA, The NBA, and the Long-Standing Gender Inequity at the Game's Highest Level', *Utah Law Review* 2015, no. 3 (2015): 572.
[31] Heywood and Dworkin, *Built to Win*, 51. Emphasis in original.

The History of Women in Sports includes team sports such as baseball and basketball alongside histories of women's participation in individual activities including tennis, golf, and figure skating.[32] The emphasis on these sports is almost certainly because women have taken part in these activities more extensively than others. Writing on women playing violent sports, such as boxing, is limited. L.A. Jennings' 2014 book *She's a Knockout: A History of Women in Fighting Sports* works to amend this absence, and focuses on women in fighting sports from the Georgian era through to mixed martial arts in the early twenty-first century.[33] Jennings' background as a mixed martial arts and weightlifting coach explains her interest in this area.[34] Women in vaudeville who took part in boxing in front of paying crowds are the focus of work by Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister.[35] Pfister's background in writing about female soccer players and boxers demonstrates her broader interest in women's participation in less traditional sports. This history of women playing football will significantly add to this literature of women taking part in highly violent physical activities.

Many academics focus their research on just one sport, but only a relatively small range exists. There are some examples of general sporting histories, including Allen Guttmann's *Women's Sports: A History*, which covers women's sport from the ancient Egyptians through to the 1980s and Susan Cahn's emphasis on gender and sexuality in twentieth-century women's sport, but most work focuses on only one sport.[36]

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[32] Lissa Smith, ed., *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998).
[33] L.A. Jennings, *She's a Knockout: A History of Women in Fighting Sports* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).
[34] CSW Association, 'L.A. Jennings', https://erikpaulson.com/la-jennings/ (accessed 2 February 2020).
[35] Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister, 'Women Boxers: Actresses to Athletes – The Role of Vaudeville in Early Women's Boxing in the USA', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1912.
[36] Allen Guttmann, *Women's Sport: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 1994).

Baseball is a popular topic for academic studies, and Marilyn Cohen, and more recently Debra Shattuck, both emphasise the constraints that women faced in their attempts to play the sport.[37] These restrictions include the inherent masculinity associated with baseball that is also the focus of Jennifer Ring's and Carol Pierman's work.[38] Merrie Fidler focuses on the origins of women's professional baseball in the 1940s and 1950s, and her detailed historical and contextual information demonstrates how women's participation echoed social norms.[39] Baseball, like football, is a sport strongly associated with masculinity, and there have always been similarities between the two activities in how the media depicted the women who played them. Basketball is well represented in the academic literature, reflecting the fact that women were able to participate in this sport from its beginning, and before authorities and educators considered it a 'man's activity', a characteristic that was not true for football.[40] Numerous texts focus on the history of women playing basketball, including work by Grundy and Susan Shackleford, Robin Markels, Shelley Lucas, and others.[41] Football, like baseball, had strong links to masculinity, but, unlike basketball, football authorities

[37] Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009); Debra Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
[38] Jennifer Ring, 'Invisible Women in America's National Pastime…or, "She's Good. It's History, Man"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 1 (2013): 61; Carol Pierman, 'Baseball, Conduct, and True Womanhood', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 1-2 (2005): 71.
[39] Merrie Fidler, *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).
[40] Pamela Grundy, Murry Nelson, and Mark Dyreson, 'The Emergence of Basketball as an American National Pastime: From a Popular Participant Sport to a Spectacle of Nationhood', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 135.
[41] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Robin Markels, 'Bloomer Basketball and Its Suspender Suspension: Women's Intercollegiate Competition at Ohio State, 1904-1907', *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 1 (2000): 31-49; Shelley Lucas, 'Courting Controversy: Gender and Power in Iowa Girls Basketball', *Journal of Sport History* 30, no. 3 (2003): 281-308; Mandy Treagus, 'Playing Like Ladies: Basketball, Netball and Feminine Restraint', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 1 (2005): 88-105; Pamela Dean, '"Dear Sisters" and "Hated Rivals": Athletics and Gender at Two New South Women's Colleges, 1893-1920', *Journal of Sport History* 24, no. 3 (1997): 341-351; Rita Liberti, '"We Were Ladies, We Just Played Basketball Like Boys": African American Womanhood and Competitive Basketball at Bennett College, 1928-1942', *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 3 (1999): 567-584.

firmly established the game as a male sport in its formative years. Consequently, developing a history of women playing football not only adds to the range of team sports that women played but also provides an additional angle from which to analyse the impact that issues such as sport's inherent masculinity had on women's physical activity.

Out of these sporting histories several themes emerge. Regardless of the sport and the years in which they were playing, educators' opinions as well as social attitudes required women to behave in what they considered an appropriate manner. This constraint also impacted women who played football. Cohen explains that this emphasis on appropriate behaviour in baseball extended from the 'Bloomer Girls' of the nineteenth century through to the women who played baseball during World War II.[42] Both Cohen and Cahn emphasise journalists' and sports administrators' concern that 'mannish' sportswomen provoked, a fear that Shattuck notes resulted in an emphasis on female players' femininity.[43] Many authors make the connection between appropriate activities for women and educators' and physicians' worries over their health. For example, two chapters in Mangan and Park's *From Fair Sex to Feminism* focus on the medical rationales employed to restrict women's sporting opportunity to ensure that they did not damage their reproductive systems.[44] Similarly, books and articles that focus on a single sport refer to potential reproductive damage, including

[42] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*.
[43] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*; Cahn, *Coming on Strong*; Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*.
[44] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and their Role in Nineteenth-Century America', in *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras*, ed. J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 13-37; Patricia Vertinsky, 'Body Shapes: The Role of Medical Establishment in Informing Female Exercise and Physical Education in Nineteenth-Century North America', in *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialisation of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras*, ed. J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 256-281.

those by Mandy Treagus and Grundy and Shackleford.[45] The myth of female frailty, according to Lenskyj in 1986, remains 'extremely resistant to change', indicating her opinion that these issues continue to impact women's sporting opportunities.[46] These beliefs are at the core of female participation in football, a highly masculine and violent sport with the potential to cause significant injury to participants.

The result of educators' concerns was an emphasis on modifying sports to make them appropriate for young women, and much of the literature highlights these changes. For example, Senda Berenson's adaptation of basketball into a game that allowed the reinforcement of feminine ideals, with limited running and physical contact, provided women with more opportunities to play than did unmodified football.[47] Treagus similarly notes that educational authorities needed to satisfy the concerns of female physical educators who may have disagreed with the practice of women playing basketball. Key to this was 'distinguishing the women's game from the men's [as] part of the process of de-masculinizing the game so that it would be acceptable'.[48] Therefore, modified football could become an appropriate version of the sport for women. Pamela Dean mentions Clara Baer's amendments to basketball at Sophie Newcomb College that reduced contact and running more than Berenson's game.[49] Similar changes occurred in baseball, and both Cohen and Ring remark on the creation of softball as a modified form of baseball.[50] Ring mentions the derogatory nicknames that commentators gave the sport to emphasise its femininity, including 'Sissy ball' and 'Nancy Ball'.[51] Educators' concerns over modifications to activities are also evident in writing on

[45] Treagus, 'Playing Like Ladies', 88-105; Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*.
[46] Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds*, 35.
[47] Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*, 26.
[48] Treagus, 'Playing Like Ladies', 91.
[49] Dean, 'Dear Sisters and Hated Rivals', 341.
[50] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 129-131; Ring, 'Invisible Women', 62.
[51] Ring, 'Invisible Women', 62.

women's physical education. Martha Verbrugge explains that physical education teachers lowered volleyball nets for females, while Lynn Coutrier states that educators modified play day activities to remove masculine characteristics.[52] It is clear that when women gained more sporting opportunity, it was frequently in a different form to male versions of the same sport, ensuring that women adhered to the conventional femininity in which educators believed.

Historians have written about social class in women's sport and they frequently demonstrate that the lower classes have historically been able to take part in far more vigorous sports than the middle class. Health and physical education historian Park notes that women from the lower classes took part in wrestling, long-distance cycling, and pedestrianism and that the women often received favourable coverage in the newspapers.[53] This press coverage demonstrates that society did not hold women of the working class to the same gender norms as those from the middle class, due, in part, because 'society extracted brutally hard labour' from working-class women.[54] Therefore, arguments about female involvement in vigorous and violent sports is potentially a class issue rather than one about limiting physical damage to women.

Football's strong association with manliness and masculinity is a central theme for much of the academic writing about the sport. Smith details football's emergence in a society with fewer venues than in earlier years for men to demonstrate their manliness. He also considers nineteenth-century football advocates' use of the sport as a

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[52] Martha Verbrugge, *Active Bodies: A History of Women's Physical Education in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 204; Lynn Coutrier, '"Play With Us, Not Against Us": The Debate About Play Days in the Regulation of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 4 (2008): 421-442.
[53] Roberta Park, 'Contesting the Norm: Women and Professional Sports in Late Nineteenth-Century America', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 5 (2012): 732.
[54] Dorothy Schneider and Carl Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 11.

replacement for war and a cure for effeminacy.[55] Park, Steven Riess, Oriard, Scott McQuilkin, as well as authors of many general sporting histories similarly note football's role in providing a space for men to prove their manliness in the late nineteenth century.[56] The sport's emphasis on masculinity explains the struggles that women faced in their attempts to play. These histories lack analysis on the impact that the importance of masculinity had on women's participation in the sport, or how women playing football could challenge male hegemony.

The sport's violent nature, and the public controversies that it caused, has drawn the focus of many historians. The relevance of this for women playing football within a patriarchal society is clear, as it created further restrictions on women's opportunities to participate. John Sayle Watterson takes controversy as a critical element in his book's title: *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy*. Much of this controversy stemmed from the sport's violence. Watterson's splits his book into three parts, the first of which is titled 'Injuries'.[57] His emphasis on the sport's contentious elements, and especially injuries and deaths, highlights the problems that football faced, especially in its formative years. Both Guttmann and McQuilkin analyse football's high level of violence and the attempts by reformers, including United States President Theodore Roosevelt, to reduce it.[58] In some cases, academic work focuses on just one element

[55] Ronald Smith, 'American Football Becomes the Dominant Intercollegiate National Pastime', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 114-5.
[56] Roberta Park, 'Biological Thought, Athletics and the Formation of a "Man of Character": 1830-1900', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 24, no. 12 (2007): 1543-1569; Roberta Park, '"Soldiers May Fall but Athletes Never!" Sport as an Antidote to Nervous Disease and National Decline in America, 1865-1905', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 6 (2012): 792-812; Steven Riess, 'Sport and the Redefinition of American Middle-Class Masculinity', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 8, no. 1 (1991): 5-27; Oriard, *Reading Football*; Scott McQuilkin, 'Brutality in Football and the Creation of the NCAA: A Codified Moral Compass in Progressive America', *Sport History Review* 33, no. 1 (2002): 1-34.
[57] Watterson, *College Football*.
[58] Allen Guttmann, 'Civilized Mayhem: Origins and Early Development of American Football', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media Politics* 9, no. 4 (2006): 533-541; McQuilkin, 'Brutality in Football'.

of the football crisis, including McQuilkin and Smith's focus on 'The Rise and Fall of the Flying Wedge', a particularly violent formation, and Emily Harrison's article, 'The First Concussion Crisis'.[59] The timing of Harrison's work in 2014, and its publication in the *American Journal of Public Health*, reflect recent concerns regarding concussions in football and indicate that contemporary issues in the sport, as embodied in USA Football's 'Heads Up Football' campaign of 2012, can result in research into the sport's history.[60] Football's violence was an essential element of the sport; it provided a site for proving masculinity, and as a result, this ensured that the game survived its controversies.[61]

Academics do not entirely ignore women's participation in the sport, and many authors write about how women's role as spectators was a key focus of newspaper coverage, especially in the sport's early years. Historians remark that football authorities encouraged female onlookers because women were a civilising influence compared with the violence on the field.[62] Oriard makes a similar observation by suggesting that 'female beauty was an ornament on male prowess', contrasting this decorative role with the players' physicality, and helping to ease what football and media scholar Thomas Oates contends were 'deep anxieties over shifting gender relations'.[63] Female spectators' passivity contrasted with the increasing independence of the New Woman. However, Jaime Schultz and Andrew Linden contend that women used football to gain

[59] Scott McQuilkin and Ronald Smith, 'The Rise and Fall of the Flying Wedge: Football's Most Controversial Play', *Journal of Sport History* 20, no. 1 (1993): 57-64; Emily A. Harrison, 'The First Concussion Crisis', *American Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 5 (2014): 822-833.
[60] USA Football, 'Heads Up Football', https://usafootball.com/programs/heads-up-football/ (accessed 3 February 2020).
[61] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 191.
[62] Benjamin Lisle, '"We Make a Big Effort to Bring Out the Ladies": Visual Representations of Women in the Modern American Stadium', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 8-9 (2011): 1205. Oriard also contends this in *King Football*, 176.
[63] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 251; Thomas Oates, 'Representing the Audience: The Gendered Politics of Sport Media', *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 4 (2012): 604-5.

publicity and be part of the 'social set' who attended these matches.[64] Women's decorative function was also evident in the role of cheerleader. For example, Rader states that 'female cheerleading enhanced the "manliness" of male athletic contests'.[65] Academic studies of cheerleading history by authors such as Natalie Adams, Pamela Bettis, and Mary Ellen Hanson focus on the debate about female cheerleaders, a role that was associated with male leadership until the 1930s.[66] It is easy, therefore, to assume that women simply did not play football given their essential role in contrasting with the hyper-masculine players. Watterson's thorough examination of the collegiate game from its beginnings through to the modern era has only four pages out of 418 dedicated to women's roles. His only references to women are as spectators and as coaches' wives, who he speculates may have assisted their husbands, but he includes nothing on women as players.[67]

Academics have written little about women as players within the years covered by this work. For example, in *King Football* Oriard began to shed light on women playing the sport in the 1930s and 1950s, providing just 12 specific examples.[68] Half of these cases were of female students who played in powderpuff games (see Chapter 5), but he also mentions six young women who joined male teams.[69] *Rites of Fall: High School Football in Texas*, an illustrated coffee table book, briefly mentioned only one of these players, Frankie Groves, despite there being many more examples of women playing

[64] Jaime Schultz and Andrew Linden, 'From Ladies' Days to Women's Initiatives: American Pastimes and Distaff Consumption', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2004): 159.
[65] Benjamin Rader, *American Sports from the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Television*, 5th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 231.
[66] Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, 'Commanding the Room in Short Skirts: Cheering as the Embodiment of Ideal Girlhood', *Gender and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 73-91; Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, *Cheerleader: An American Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Mary Ellen Hanson, *Go! Fight! Win! Cheerleading in American Culture* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995).
[67] Watterson, *College Football*, 99.
[68] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 248.
[69] Oriard, *King Football*, 352-363.

football in the state.[70] Other works such as Robert Peterson's *Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football* and Dave Revsine's *The Opening Kick-Off: The Tumultuous Birth of a Football Nation* fail to mention women's roles in football at all.[71] More academic work exists on female football players in the post-1960 period. These studies focus either on the legalities of women playing or on interviewing current or former players. Sarah Fields, Eileen McDonagh, and Laura Pappano analyse women's participation in contact sports and utilise case studies of female football players attempting to play on male teams, reflecting their interests in gender and the law.[72] Fields focuses on the 1970s and 1980s while McDonagh and Pappano concentrate on the 2000s and issues of sex segregation and the limitations of Title IX. Research that focuses on interviewing players all take different emphases. Linden interviewed female football players from the 1970s, and his work places them within the broader social context of the time, including the expanding feminist movement.[73] Sociologists Todd Migliaccio and Ellen Berg focus on a professional women's team in California in the 2000s, exploring the constraints the women encountered when playing the sport.[74] They continued this research for a 2014 article on the extent to which women adopt a masculine sport ethic when playing contact football.[75] A similar issue about female players feeling a need to play in a highly physical manner is the focus of Bobbi Knapp's work on a team in the Midwest and the

[70] Geoff Winningham, *Rites of Fall: High School Football in Texas* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1979), 78.
[71] Peterson, *Pigskin*; Revsine, *The Opening Kickoff*.
[72] Sarah Fields, *Female Gladiators: Gender, Law, and Contact Sport in America* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[73] Andrew D. Linden, 'Revolution on the American Gridiron: Gender, Contested Space, and Women's Football in the 1970s', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 18 (2015): 1-19.
[74] Todd Migliaccio and Ellen Berg, 'Women's Participation in Tackle Football: An Exploration of Benefits and Constraints', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 42, no. 3 (2007): 271-287.
[75] Ellen Berg, Todd Migliaccio, and Rosemary Anzini-Varesio, 'Female Football Players, the Sport Ethic and the Masculinity-Sport Nexus', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 17, no. 2 (2014): 176-189.

construction of player identities.[76] Far more research exists on recent participation by women in the sport than in the pre-Title IX era. While the post-Title IX era does provide increasing opportunities for women in physically demanding sports, these activities grew out of earlier sports traditions and experiences, including football. There is thus a significant gap in the historiography of women playing football, especially in the pre-Title IX years.

What has appeared more recently are the one-off snapshots, but a deep and rigorous understanding of the long and earliest history of women playing football continues to be missing. For example, in 2019, Pfister provided a brief outline of women's history in football from the 1890s to the 2010s. She summarises their playing history, including contextual information regarding the importance of football as a site to prove masculinity, as well as a brief consideration of women in leadership roles. While this work provides a broad overview, it lacks the depth and rigour that the topic requires, and it is let down by the inaccurate claim that Luverne Wise was the first female to score points against male players and referring to Agnes Rifner as Risner.[77] Katie Taylor, Andrew Linden, and Dunja Antunovic's 2019 article has a tighter focus than Pfister's work, analysing media representations of female football players over 45 years. This work on women playing football between 1934 and 1979 provides an initial analysis of the issues faced by female football players and the media's reaction to their participation, but it remains a starting point for further research.[78] Research on specific teams and leagues have also begun to emerge. For example, in February 2016, Erica

[76] Bobbi Knapp, 'Smash Mouth Football: Identity Development and Maintenance on a Women's Tackle Football Team', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 38, no. 1 (2014): 51-74.
[77] Gertrud Pfister, 'Challenging the Gender Order: Women on the Gridiron', in *Touchdown: An American Obsession*, ed. Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing, 2019), 197-213.
[78] Katie Taylor, Andrew Linden, and Dunja Antunovic, '"From Beach Nymph to Gridiron Amazon": Media Coverage of Women in American Football, 1934-1979', *Communication & Sport* (2019), doi: 10.1177/2167479519871961.

Westley wrote a brief article for the *Smithsonian Magazine* about the leagues in Los Angeles and Chicago in 1939 and 1941 respectively.[79] Similarly, in July 2019, Chantel Jennings, for *The Athletic*, wrote about the 1926 girls' football team in Cavour, South Dakota, for which this author provided context.[80] The emergence of these works coincides with an increased awareness of the involvement of women in football. One of the largest women's football leagues, the Women's Football Alliance, started operations in 2009 and it regularly promotes its activities on social media.[81] Similarly, the NFL's Women's Careers in Football Forum began in 2017, following the Arizona Cardinals' appointment of Jen Welter as the first female coach in the league in 2015. The forum aims to increase opportunities for women to work in the sport and is raising public awareness of female involvement in football.[82]

Many examples of women playing football come from educational settings, but the historiography of women's education has often focused on a narrow range of activities and establishments, and has rarely noticed football. While a variety of books that focus solely on women's education exist, many of them focus on higher education rather than high school, where most examples of women playing football took place.[83] Histories of

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[79] Erica Westley, 'The Forgotten History of Women's Football', 5 February 2016, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/forgotten-history-womens-football-180958042/ (accessed 23 February 2018).
[80] Chantel Jennings, 'Ladies Who Led: The untold story behind Cavour (S.D.) High school girls football and the 'Female Red Grange', 29 July 2019, https://theathletic.com/1101489/2019/07/29/girls-high-school-football-1926-south-dakota-cavour-high-school/ (accessed 12 September 2019).
[81] Women's Football Alliance, 'Mission and History', http://www.wfaprofootball.com/about/ (accessed 2 February 2020).
[82] National Football League, 'Women's Careers in Football Forum', https://operations.nfl.com/football-ops/economic-social-impact/womens-careers-in-football-forum/ (accessed 26 May 2020).
[83] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett ed., *Catholic Women's Colleges in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Andrea Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Irene Harworth, Mindi Maline, and Elizabeth DeBra,

the high school system tend to exist within broader accounts of the education system such as John Pulliam's 1930 *History of American Education* or academic articles with specific focuses, such as Claudia Goldin's evaluation of the spread of secondary education in America in the twentieth century.[84] Physical activity and sport are not prominent in these works, something Fan Hong notes is common where 'sport has been viewed as trivial' and thus 'unworthy of serious attention' by academics.[85] Several texts focus on the educational experiences of women but include nothing on physical education or sporting opportunity, limiting readers' comprehensive understanding of women's educational lives.[86]

Much of the research around women's physical education focuses on physicians' and physical educators' concerns over women's health and their involvement in formal competition. Frederick Rudolph contends that medical experts' fears that women could not cope with educational demands led women's colleges to place 'extraordinary stress on health, hygiene, and physiology' from their inceptions.[87] As a result, some work, such as that by Susan Zieff, concentrates on female physicians. Zieff focuses on Clelia

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Women's Colleges in the United States: History, Issues, and Challenges (Washington DC: DIANE Publishing, 1997).

[84] John Pulliam, *History of American Education* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1982); Claudia Goldin, 'America's Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 2 (1998): 345-374.

[85] Fan Hong, 'Freeing Bodies: Heroines in History', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, no. 1 (2001): 1.

[86] Barbara Solomon Miller, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1990); Amy Thompson McCandless, 'Maintaining the Spirit and Tone of Robust Manliness: The Battle Against Coeducation at Southern Colleges and Universities, 1890-1940', *NWSA Journal* 2, no. 2 (1990): 199-216; Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999); Elizabeth Eschbach, *The Higher Education of Women in England and America, 1865-1920* (New York: Garland, 1993).

[87] Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 325.

Mosher and Lillian Welsh, and demonstrates that while both women understood the need for female students to be physically active and to strengthen themselves, neither focused much on team sports, preferring individual sports like gymnastics, hiking, and cycling.[88] Park also emphasises the role of physical educators in determining suitable activities for female students.[89] Where academic work includes women's physical activity within educational establishments, the focus is primarily on participation and not competition.[90] For example, Verbrugge's *Active Bodies* covers the history of physical education for women in the twentieth century. Only one chapter focuses on competition, and she writes about the play days, field days, and intramural events in which female students participated between the 1920s and 1950s.[91] Educators created these less competitive events for women as an attempt to ensure that female physical activity fitted into the anti-competition movement of the time that Coutrier and Ellen Gerber both emphasise.[92] The development of telegraphic meets, events that developed from play days, and intramural sports during the Depression are also the focus of work by Brad Austin.[93] The only team sports mentioned across all three texts are basketball, field hockey, volleyball, dodgeball, and softball. Few books discuss the sporting and extra-curricular activities that the students were able to enjoy, and even fewer examine the team sports that they played. For example, Verbrugge mentions 'lighter forms of baseball', as do Robert Pruter and Lynn Gordon, while Andrea Radke-

[88] Susan Zieff, 'Leading the Way in Science, Medicine and Physical Training: Female Physicians in Academia, 1890-1930', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 7 (2010): 1220.
[89] Roberta Park, 'Women as Leaders: What Women Have Attained in and Through the Field of Physical Education', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 7 (2010): 1260.
[90] Ibid., 1222, 1229.
[91] Verbrugge, *Active Bodies*.
[92] Coutrier, 'Play With Us, Not Against Us', 421-442; Ellen Gerber, 'The Controlled Development of Collegiate Sport for Women, 1923-1936', *Journal of Sport History* 2, no. 1 (1975): 1-28.
[93] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015).

Moss references basketball and field hockey.[94] The dominant discourse on the activities that women in educational establishments played is limited to mostly individual sports such as tennis, callisthenics, archery, swimming, bowling, track and field, and informal competition. There is a distinct lack of awareness of other team sports that young women in these establishments played, including football.

The relatively small range of sports covered in the historiography of women's sport extends into the literature on women's physical education. The narrative predominantly focuses on gymnastics and individual sports that strengthened young women to counteract medical experts' concerns; what is missing is an awareness of the full range of activities that female students played.

According to much of this literature, class, conventional femininity, and medical concerns restricted women's participation in sports. Historians have approached women's football through various lenses; where they have mentioned female involvement, the emphasis has been on peripheral roles as spectators and as a civilising influence. What little research exists about women playing football between 1890 and 1960 lacks depth, and these articles are merely snapshots of a much bigger picture. The examples of women playing football in these years not only reveal the wide-ranging nature of women's participation in football but also challenge the dominant narrative of the sport as one of masculinity, one where women's role was primarily on the sidelines.

[94] Verbrugge, *Active Bodies*, 156; Robert Pruter, *The Rise of the American High School and the Search for Control, 1880-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 147; Lynn Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 124; Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 213, 219.

Methodology

The educational establishments, formal leagues, and newspapers created documentation about the organisation of, and reaction to, these female football matches, only some of which have survived. This thesis utilises these sources to analyse the reaction of the media, educationalists, and sporting authorities to these women through a focus on the language and visuals of surviving materials. Theoretical perspectives drawn from gender and media studies underpin the analysis, providing an interdisciplinary approach. Toni Bruce's rules of media representation and Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory drove the analysis of newspaper articles, newsreels, and the archival material from educational establishments that form the basis of this work.

Newspapers were an essential source of information for this project, providing detail on what happened as well as evidence about how the media treated these female players. Football historian Oriard notes that 'the history of football is inextricably tied to the history of the media'.[95] He further explains that football fans gleaned their knowledge through newspapers between 1890 and 1960, making these resources critical as a basis of information for this project. Oriard states that his study, like this one, ended in 1960 because at that point 'the full arrival of television' transformed the sport again.[96] Similarly, Arthur Marwick states that the use of newspapers assists in the identification of valuable evidence regarding 'attitudes, assumptions, mentalities, and values', a further theme of this work.[97] Football's rise presented benefits to various groups: newspaper owners reaped the rewards of increasing readership, the readers themselves felt an association with the elite colleges, the universities saw media coverage as a form of promotion, and advertisers could benefit from targeting specific

[95] Oriard, *King Football*, 11.
[96] Ibid., 12.
[97] Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (London: Lyceum Books, 2001), 168.

audiences.[98] The short-lived nature of many games has meant that little documentation remains of these endeavours. As a consequence, newspapers serve as the primary source to understand how social attitudes and wider gender views impacted female players.

Newspapers in the nineteenth century underwent significant changes as they moved from being political mouthpieces to commercial enterprises. Influences on the press included 'changes in literacy, urbanization, improvements in technology, the impact of economic change and related entrepreneurial activities … and the demands of industrialization'.[99] The 'modern commercial newspaper' developed in the nineteenth century and owners aimed them at a broad cross-section of the population.[100] To attract a wide readership, the content of newspapers expanded, and '[h]uman interest and other specialised beats such as crime, sports, and society news were the hallmarks of the popular press.'[101] Sports pages developed in the 1880s, but it took until the 1920s before they were a standardised element of all major newspapers.[102] Sports coverage doubled in the 1920s from earlier decades, and the increasing development of the sports section provided space for reports of more events, including women's football games.[103] The sports page held several functions: it helped increase circulation, and therefore profit, but was also a means of making links with the readers who were increasingly interested in sport. Revsine contends that financial needs drove the incorporation of a sports section at a time when newspapers were moving their

[98] Revsine, *The Opening Kickoff*, 78; Rudolph, *The American College*, 384.
[99] Gerald Baldasty, *Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 37.
[100] David Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and their Readers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 145.
[101] Thomas Leonard, *News for All: America's Coming of Age with the Press* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 91.
[102] Rader, *American Sports from the Age of Folk Games*, 123.
[103] Oriard, *King Football*, 11.

focus away from subscriptions and towards advertising. The inclusion of sports pages to increase newspaper appeal is an important methodological issue for this project. Where editors chose to place reports of women's matches indicates who they thought would be interested in reading them. In positioning articles in a sports section, editors demonstrated that the predominantly male readers of these pages would be interested in the story and that perhaps women's matches were similar to male games.

Alongside the growth of the sports section was the development of Sunday editions and women's pages. By the 1890s, newspaper owners focused on women as an increasingly important demographic to increase revenue. Advertisers wanted to target women who 'one trade journal estimated bought six-sevenths of what came into the home'.[104] As a result, newspapers, especially Sunday editions, developed women's pages.[105] While these sections often contained fashion and cookery advice, they also included stories about the activities that women pursued.[106] Newspapers, and especially the penny press, which cost only one cent and were 'bright and loud', also featured scandal and gossip, providing an element of entertainment.[107] This combined emphasis on sport and scandal provided space for reports of women's football games.

Despite the increasing popularity of the radio and newsreels in the 1920s and 1930s, newspapers remained the primary source of news for most Americans, and during the Depression, daily circulation increased.[108] However, the rise in television ownership throughout the 1950s challenged newspapers' dominance by providing 'an immediacy

[104] Baldasty, *Commercialization of News*, 117.
[105] Ibid., 126.
[106] Alice Fahs, *Out on Assignment: Newspaper Women and the Making of Modern Public Space* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 231.
[107] Baldasty, *Commercialization of News*, 46; Martin Conboy, *Press and Popular Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 49.
[108] Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *Defining Moments: Muckrakers and the Progressive Era* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2010), 86.

and visual appeal that newspapers and magazines often lacked'.[109] Local newspapers played an important role in disseminating information across the United States, a process that was otherwise slow due to the country's size.[110] Smaller newspapers relied on syndicated material from organisations like the Associated Press to keep their costs low. This use of third-party content partly explains how newspapers reported examples of female football players from one coast to the other.[111] Nevertheless, editors still decided which syndicated material to use, and the inclusion of reports indicates that women's games were still clearly of interest to these newspapermen. Local newspapers also provided insight into stories that may not have garnered national attention.

A starting point for accessing newspaper reports was Chronicling America, a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress. This free-to-access digital archive holds over 15 million pages from over 2,500 newspapers.[112] The publications that Chronicling America covers include those from large cities such as Los Angeles and New York but also those from small towns such as Tombstone, Arizona, and Butte, Montana. Additional reports came from accessing the full range of 28 ProQuest Historical Newspapers at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. This resource included the *Atlanta Constitution*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Cleveland Call & Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Washington Post*. Subscribing to Newspapers.com further increased the range of newspapers, providing access to over 12,000 publications and

[109] Ibid., 87.
[110] Joel Wiener, *The Americanisation of the British Press 1830s-1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 57.
[111] Baldasty, *Commercialization of News*, 91.
[112] Library of Congress, 'Chronicling America', http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov (accessed 8 July 2019).

over 512 million pages.[113] A visit to Bowling Green State University provided access to essential non-digitised publications such as the *Toledo Blade*.

The digitisation of newspaper articles, as Adrian Bingham argues, allows for 'greater and more sophisticated engagement with newspaper content' than accessing physical versions.[114] The ability to search quickly for digitised articles allows additional time for analysis, as reports can be saved and printed out later. However, these benefits need to be tempered by the drawbacks that digitisation can also create. Bingham notes problems regarding keyword searching and that the 'absence of a particular word does not mean that a subject is not discussed'.[115] Using different combinations of words helps to overcome the issue Bingham raised. For example, 'football' can sometimes appear as 'foot ball' or 'foot-ball', and newspapers sometimes referred to women as 'girls', 'ladies', or 'coeds' in the case of educational establishments. The employment of a broad range of individual terms such as 'foot ball', 'football', 'women', 'ladies', 'girls', and 'coeds' in different arrangements combats the issue of different terminology. This method does reduce the chance of serendipitous discoveries, but the emergence of extensive evidence utilising a keyword approach meant that such findings were less critical.

Digital archives' occasional emphasis on just the article reduces the crucial visual aspect of newspapers that researchers cannot ignore. James Mussell contends that how the editor presented the material on the page is as important as the written word in establishing how readers would have viewed these articles.[116] Analysis of the entire

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[113] Newspapers.com, 'About Newspapers.com', https://www.newspapers.com/about/ (accessed 3 July 2019).
[114] Adrian Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 225.
[115] Ibid., 229.
[116] James Mussell, *Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 25.

page reveals the editor's opinions about how important the story was; thus, a crucial part of the analysis of articles included noting page numbers, their position, and their size compared to others on the page.[117] A key analytical element was whether the editor included the story as sports news, women's news, or in Sunday magazines.[118] Analysing this positioning provides insight into how editors viewed the stories and who they believed was interested in the article.

Reports rarely mentioned women's reasons for playing football or had many quotations from players themselves. This lack of a female voice means that in many cases, historians do not have the benefit of these young women's thoughts. It is also critical to be aware that when articles included some players' comments, these are deliberate journalistic interventions, and the author has included the statements to suit the aim of their report. Consequently, they may have used them out of context and framed them in a way that suited their attitudes and beliefs.

Newsreels, shown at movie theatres before the main feature, frequently showed football and provide further insight into the media response to female players. Men's football made up 20 to 25 per cent of newsreel coverage in the 1930s.[119] An analysis of the limited examples of female football players on newsreels came from accessing British Pathé and the University of California, Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, which houses a major moving image collection. These vignettes were subject to heavy editing, with hour-long matches reduced to footage rarely longer than six minutes, but they still reveal a great deal about the media's response to these female football

[117] Gary Osmond and Murray Phillips, 'Introduction: The Bones of Digital History', in *Sport History in the Digital Era*, ed. Gary Osmond and Murray Phillips (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 16.
[118] Fahs, *Out on Assignment*, 4.
[119] Oriard, *King Football*, 11.

games. As with any source, noting the intended audience and the fact that producers of the newsreels would have experienced 'commercial pressure to give the public what it … wanted' was crucial.[120] Newsreels provide an indispensable visual representation of what was happening in these games and provide 'powerful ideological reinforcement of wider cultural sporting attitudes'.[121] Although written reports may have exaggerated elements or portrayed the sport in a particular way, the ability to see the clothing that players were wearing and the amount of physical contact in the game provides crucial detail. However, directors might have staged some of the events for the camera, and we have no way of knowing how contrived any shots may have been. The newsreels of female football players offer additional insight into what editors believed their audiences wanted to see and how wider society likely viewed these young women's activities. Analysis of the commentators' choice of words, and listening to the phrases and tone of voice was crucial to understanding how these sources represented the female players.

Beyond these media sources, archival material of women playing football is scarce, due in part to the brevity of many leagues and competitions. A search of ArchiveGrid, a collection of more than 4 million descriptions of archival material, yielded little information, particularly on leagues, clubs, and commercial entities involved in the sport.[122] However, searches of the Seven Sisters colleges' archives generated important information about the role of touch football in these settings. Educational establishments kept their own records of female sporting involvement through reports by the physical education department and Athletic Association. These colleges are a useful source for the study of any early women's organised sport; as Jean Williams

[120] Mike Huggins, 'Projecting the Visual: British Newsreels, Soccer and Popular Culture 1918-39', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 24, no. 1 (2007): 85.
[121] Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 2006), x; Huggins, 'Projecting the Visual', 81.
[122] OCLC Research, 'ArchiveGrid', https://www.oclc.org/research/themes/research-collections/archivegrid.html (accessed 3 September 2019).

states, ‘much of the documentation regarding sporting activity comes from these elite institutions’.[123] Founders established these colleges to offer a curriculum equal in quality to those in men’s institutions, where administrators refused to admit women.[124] From the outset, it is evident that women were furthering their sphere of influence and entering into male domains within society; thus, the development of competitive sport was a logical step. Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein refer to students and educators taking a ‘confident stride’ towards a variety of games in the 1890s within these establishments, and football fits this model.[125] The colleges provided a single-sex environment, away from public view, which contributed to what physical educators believed was an acceptable atmosphere for women to play sports. As education historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz describes it, the educators and founders ‘courageously claimed a male preserve for women’ including opportunities for physical activity not available outside of these institutions.[126] Consequently, these establishments’ archives were essential sources of information. An initial starting point was the Seven Sisters colleges: Barnard (NY), Bryn Mawr (PA), Mount Holyoke (MA), Radcliffe (MA), Smith (MA), Vassar (NY), and Wellesley (MA). Searches of the colleges’ online archives, including yearbooks, student newspapers, and student diaries, sought references to football; the student diaries provided insight into campus attitudes about some of the football events.[127] Similarly, student newspapers were

[123] Jean Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women’s Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 56.
[124] Linda Perkins, ‘The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 1880-1960’, *Harvard Educational Review* 67, no. 4 (1997): 718.
[125] Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 132.
[126] Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater*, xxiv.
[127] Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 17.

usually independent of faculty control, thus providing historians with insights on students' views and the importance that they attributed to an event.

Archives are not perfect sources; Dave Day and Wray Vamplew note that they are potential sites of power 'reflecting the prejudices of those establishing the archive and thus privileging some information over other data'.[128] Martin Johnes states that archivists agree that institutions only archive between one and five per cent of their material.[129] Vassar College's archives were the most widely used in this work, but they are not necessarily representative of all colleges. Therefore, it is not possible to contend from the Vassar case study that other colleges had similar approaches. Documents from both Vassar and Radcliffe support arguments and provide valuable context. Gaps in materials from other colleges does not mean that students did not play football there, and more women likely played the sport than this project has been able to uncover.

The linguistic analysis of the articles required several considerations. Noting articles' language and use of particular words and phrases was instrumental. While a newspaper's original audience may not have consciously engaged with its language, unless it was particularly problematic or offensive to them, historians recognise the value of in-depth textual analysis of these everyday and common sense sources. As Alan McKee suggests, this involves finding a likely interpretation of the text in context, taking account of what the original readers would have understood by particular words, phrases, picture captions, headlines, and whole articles.[130] This balance between what

[128] Dave Day and Wray Vamplew, 'Sports History Methodology: Old and New', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 15 (2015): 1717.
[129] Martin Johnes, 'Archives and Historians of Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 15 (2015): 1786.
[130] Alan McKee, *Textual Analysis: A Beginners Guide* (London: SAGE, 2003), 92.

the report says, and the newspaper's specific context (social, economic, geographical, political), forms the basis for critical analysis.

Where editors placed articles on the page reveals much about how they viewed each story's significance. As Robert Waller notes: 'designers use *perceptual principles* established by Gestalt psychologists to account for graphic relationships among elements of a page.'[131] He explains the proximity principle, whereby readers assume that articles close to each other on a page are related. Furthermore, the similarity principle means that readers assume that articles that look alike are 'members of the same category'.[132] Thus, analysis of the articles surrounding the stories about women's football matches form a critical element of this work. The implication for the analysis of newspaper articles about female football players is clear; editors would expect that readers would view reports of female games in a similar way to male matches when placed close to each other on a page.

The Gutenberg diagram can also prove a useful analytical tool for evaluating the importance that an editor places on an article. The theory, espoused by American newspaper designer Edmond Arnold in the 1950s, states that the newspaper page consists of four quarters. The primary optical area where the eye starts is at the top left of a page; '[t]he eye then moves to the top right, referred to as the strong fallow area, then diagonally down to the weak fallow area in the bottom left. Finally, it moves to the bottom right or terminal area.'[133] An editor following this design would 'place key

[131] Robert Waller, 'Graphic Literacies for a Digital Age: The Survival of Layout', *The Information Society* 28 (2012): 242. Emphasis in original.
[132] Waller, 'Graphic Literacies for a Digital Age', 242.
[133] Nigel Jackson and Katie Angliss, *A Practical Guide to Event Promotion* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 18.

elements at the top left … middle …. and bottom right'.[134] Analysing whether editors placed articles about female football players in these prominent sections reveals how significant they believed that the story was. However, editors also use pictures 'to attract the reader's attention, and to enhance the story', overruling the Gutenberg diagram.[135] Thus, any prominent photographs of women's football matches demonstrates the importance to which editors viewed that story.

The theoretical perspectives that this work draws on come from fields of sociology, gender studies, and media studies. It is impossible to separate women's sporting history from the broader societal and gender issues that impacted their opportunities to participate. Consequently, a historical analysis should similarly draw upon the language and theories of these areas of study. As Hargreaves notes, '[t]he purpose of theorizing is to help us understand the nature of sports in society.'[136] As a result, the use of theories from other disciplines within this work results in a more detailed analysis of the reaction of the media, and others, to these female football players.

Physical education and sociology scholars Jan Wright and Gill Clarke's research on the media representation of women playing rugby offers an important comparison, as rugby's high levels of physical contact are similar to those in football. Wright and Clarke argue that 'writers attempt to reconcile the contradictions of women playing rugby by developing a discourse that reassures the (primarily male) readers that these women are properly feminine … and no threat to the masculinity of male rugby players'.[137]

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[134] William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, and Jill Butler, *Universal Principles of Design: 125 Ways to Enhance Usability, Influence Perception, Increase Appeal, Make Better Design Decisions, and Teach through Design* (Beverly, MA: Rockport, 2010), 116.
[135] M. Grazia Busa, *Introducing the Language of the News: A Student's Guide* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 56.
[136] Hargreaves, *Sporting Females*, 3.
[137] Jan Wright and Gill Clarke, 'Sport, The Media, and the Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality: A Case Study of Women's Rugby Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 3 (1999): 231.

They explain that '[w]here attributes suggesting hegemonically masculine characteristics are used with individual women, these are usually countered by references that clearly indicate the heterosexual credentials of the woman.'[138] Football's strong association with manliness means that reports of female players would likely demonstrate similar characteristics. Wright and Clarke also state that discourses about femininity were not just a media construction; women themselves adopt 'heterosexual markers of attraction' to reassure readers of their heterosexuality.[139] Searches for references in articles to women's appearances and comments about their heterosexuality were vital in identifying journalistic concern about women's threat to the masculinity of male football players.

Wright and Clarke's research focuses only on the issue of compulsory heterosexuality in media reporting; thus, the application of other theoretical perspectives to the reports of women playing football was also vital. Writing in 2016, sociologist Toni Bruce established 13 traditional rules of media coverage based on her analysis of dozens of pieces of research. These academic studies are not merely the work of one author, but she draws together work from across the globe to demonstrate the pervasiveness of these rules. Bruce states that consistent evidence exists 'for many of these rules, across a range of nations, time frames, and traditional media contexts'.[140] She describes five older rules which she observes were on the wane at the time of her research, including women's sport having lower broadcast production values than male sport, gender marking, infantilization, non-sport related aspects, and comparisons to men's sport.[141] 'Infantilization', Bruce explains, is where the media describes 'adult

[138] Ibid., 238.
[139] Ibid., 234.
[140] Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74, no. 7-8 (2016): 364-5.
[141] Lower broadcast production values and gender-marking are less relevant than others to this study due to this work's lack of inclusion of televised coverage and its lack of international

sportswomen as girls, young ladies or only by their first names'; while 'non-sport-related aspects' is 'the practice of highlighting areas of sportswomen's lives such as family, personal life, their appearance and personality at the expense of attention to their sporting performance'.[142] Comparisons to men's sport are evident in articles where journalists liken female athletes to male players, seemingly as praise but with an underlying implication that men's sport is superior. While evidence of these rules may be reducing in contemporary sports reporting, articles relating to female football matches between 1890 and 1960 would likely still demonstrate some of them.

Bruce also identifies four 'persistent rules' that have been present in past media coverage, and remain today. The fact that these rules have been consistently present in media reports makes them an ideal theoretical perspective for a piece of work that covers seven decades. The first of these is the rule that 'sportswomen don't matter', where women receive less media coverage than men. Secondly, the notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality and appropriate femininity' refers to articles where reporters emphasise a female athlete's relationship with men and attributes associated with women, for example, emotionality or physical weakness. The final two are 'sexualisation', where women are objectified and the media notes their assumed heterosexual attractiveness, and finally 'ambivalence', where reports juxtapose an athlete's skill with her traditional femininity.[143]

Bruce's 13 rules are an extension of her 2003 work with Emma Wensing which identified six unwritten rules of women's sports media coverage that journalists use to

competition where gender marks are frequently added, for example the FIFA Women's World Cup.
[142] Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times', 365.
[143] Ibid., 365-6.

frame women's participation.[144] The authors explain that they based these rules on the 'consistent patterns' found in '[a]nalyses of the western media conducted over the past 20 years.' These included five old rules: gender marking, compulsory heterosexuality, appropriate femininity, infantilization, and non-sport related aspects. Wensing and Bruce added ambivalence, which they say is 'an improvement on stereotyped coverage [but which] denies sportswomen appropriate recognition and prestige.'[145] Bruce expanded these rules to represent 'the breadth of historical, current and emerging trends in media representation.'[146]

Many prominent academics who regularly write on the media representation of women's sport contributed to Bruce's 2016 rules. As Bruce notes: 'Leading up to the early 2000s, feminist researchers identified numerous representational practices through which the sports media ignored, trivialized and sexualized sportswomen.'[147] Michael Messner's work with Cheryl Cooky and Robin Hextrum, which tracked the coverage of women's sport on television between 1989 and 2009, provided evidence for the 'sportswomen don't matter' and 'compulsory heterosexuality and appropriate femininity' rules.[148] Bruce bases the rules of 'sexualisation' and 'ambivalence' on Margaret Duncan and Cynthia Hasbrook's 1988 work that analysed televised women's basketball, marathon running, and surfing and Riita Pirinen's 1997 articles that explored Finnish newspaper and magazine coverage of female athletes.[149] Pirinen's

[144] Emma H. Wensing and Toni Bruce, 'Bending the Rules: Media Representations of Gender During an International Sporting Event', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 38, no. 4 (2003): 387.
[145] Wensing and Bruce, 'Bending the Rules', 388.
[146] Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times', 361.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Michael Messner, Cheryl Cooky, and Robin Hextrum, *Gender in Televised Sports* (Centre for Feminist Research: University of Southern California, 2010).
[149] Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Cynthia A. Hasbrook, 'Denial of Power in Televised Women's Sports', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5 (1988): 1-21; Riita Pirinen, 'Catching Up With Men? Finnish Newspaper Coverage of Women's Entry into Traditionally Male Sports', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 32, no. 3 (1997): 239-249; Riita Pirinen, 'The Construction of

work also identified elements of media coverage that support the rules of 'non-sport related aspects' and 'compulsory heterosexuality and appropriate femininity'. The rule that 'sportswomen don't matter' came largely from Gaye Tuchman's influential work on the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in the media.[150]

Academics regularly use Bruce's rules and the work underpinning them to analyse media representation of sportswomen. Emily Ankers uses many of Bruce and Wensing's rules in her work, and she cites others who have used the same framework. Among these works, she includes Katherine Dashper's analysis of the coverage of female athletes at the 2016 Olympic Games, Amy Pressland's study of the representation of sportswomen in British newspapers in 2008-09, and Kate Petty and Stacey Pope's exploration of media coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup.[151] The academics who contributed to Bruce's rules noted above have similarly influenced many other articles that evaluate media representation of female athletes, or, in the case of Dunja Antunovic's work, media coverage of the first female NFL referee.[152]

Women's Positions in Sport: A Textual Analysis of Articles on Female Athletes in Finnish Women's Magazines', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 14, no. 3 (1997): 290-301.

[150] Gaye Tuchman, 'The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media', in *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*, ed. Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan, and James Benét (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 3-38.

[151] Emily Ankers, '"Everyday" Women's Experiences of Rock Climbing (1970-2020), (MRes Dissertation, Leeds Beckett University, 2020), 20; Katherine Dashper, 'Smiling Assassins, Brides-to-Be and Super Mums: The Importance of Gender and Celebrity in Media Framing of Female Athletes at the 2016 Olympic Games', *Sport in Society* 21, no. 11 (2018): 1739-1757; Amy Pressland, '"Still Struggling After All These Years?": The Representation of Sportswomen in Middle-Brow British Newspapers 2008-2009' (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2012); Kate Petty and Stacey Pope, 'A New Age for Media Coverage of Women's Sport? An Analysis of English Media Coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup', *Sociology* 53, no. 3 (2018): 486-502.

[152] Kim Toffoletti, 'Analyzing Media Representations of Sportswomen – Expanding the Conceptual Boundaries Using a Postfeminist Sensibility', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 33, no. 3 (2016): 199-207; Alina Bernstein, 'Is It Time For a Victory Lap: Changes in the Media Coverage of Women in Sport', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 37, no. 3-4 (2002): 415-428; Mary Jo Kane, 'Media Coverage of the Female Athlete Before, During, and After Title IX: *Sports Illustrated* Revisited', *Journal of Sport Management* 2 (1998): 87-99; Christina Villalon and Karen Weiller-Abels, 'NBC's Televised Media Portrayal of Female Athletes in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic Games: A Critical Feminist View', *Sport in Society* 21, no. 8 (2018): 1137-1157; Dunja Antunovic, '"A Female in a Man's World": New Media Discourses Around the First Female NFL Referee', *Journal of Sports Media* 9, no. 2 (2014): 45-71.

Bruce's article also forms the basis of other work investigating the media representation of female footballers.[153] These works stand as examples of the influence that Bruce's models have had. They cover a broad period, different sports, various types of media, and women's non-playing roles in sport. This variety demonstrates the rules' versatility, making them an ideal analytical tool.

Bruce's article was instrumental in setting the criteria for the textual analysis of the newspaper reports of women playing football. Searches for references to players' first names, perceived female attributes such as emotionality and comments about players' looks, clothing, stereotypes, and other similar comments that Amy Godoy-Pressland called 'task-irrelevant reporting' were vital.[154] Similarly, noting negative and positive comments, and comparisons that reporters made between male and female players and matches, assisted this evaluation of how reporters covered games. Through attention to this kind of detail, historical newspapers reveal their editors' and owners' assumptions about their target audiences.

Feminist media theorist Laura Mulvey's 1989 notion of the male gaze, influenced by Freud's psychoanalytic theory, provides a theoretical lens for the analysis of images that accompanied reports of these female players. Mulvey contends that the gaze portrays women as sexual objects and 'their appearances coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'. The female — in art, the media, cinema, fashion, (obviously) pornography, and other forms — thus becomes a passive object of sexual desire with a male gaze that 'projects its phantasy

[153] Taylor, et al, 'From Beach Nymph to Gridiron Amazon'; Katie Taylor, 'Here's the Football Heroine': Female American Football Players, 1890-1912, *Sport in History* 40, no. 4 (2020): 576-596.
[154] Amy Godoy-Pressland, '"No hint of bulging muscles": The Surveillance of Sportswomen's Bodies in British Print Media', *Journalism* 17, no. 6 (2016): 748.

on to the female figure'.[155] Mulvey also states that in psychoanalytic terms, the female fosters castration anxiety amongst men. Women's lack of a penis implies 'a threat of castration and hence unpleasure'; they represent 'sexual difference'.[156] She believes that the male spectator can escape this anxiety in two ways: firstly through a 're-enactment of the original trauma' and 'punishment or saving of the guilty object', and secondly through 'turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous'.[157] Mulvey's work offers clear critical insights for any study of how the media has represented women. For this project, where the majority of women playing football were 'daughters of Eve' who were 'invading' a physical domain dominated by orthodox models of masculinity, it provides a helpful critical model. This 'saving of the guilty object' is evident in reports where journalists emphasised the female players' heteronormativity.[158] Godoy-Pressland's article analysing the depiction of sportswomen's bodies in British newspapers further explains that 'the female star is turned into an ideal beauty … the camera endlessly lingers on the spectacle of female beauty' to overcome castration anxiety.[159] Her work demonstrates that researchers can apply the male gaze to newspapers' representation of sportswomen.

Some academics have criticised Mulvey's theory, a key issue being the lack of consideration of the female viewer.[160] Most of the images within this work came from sports pages aimed at male readers, which reduces this concern. Susan Bordo argues

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[155] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19. Emphasis in original.
[156] Ibid., 22.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Elyce Rae Helford, '*The Stepford Wives* And The Gaze', *Feminist Media Studies* 6, no. 2 (2006): 149.
[159] Godoy-Pressland, 'No hint of bulging muscles', 749.
[160] Matthew P. McAllister and Lauren J. DeCarvalho, 'Sexualised Branded Entertainment and the Male Consumer Gaze', *Triple C* 12, no. 1 (2014): 300-1; Miranda Sherwin, 'Deconstructing the Male Gaze: Masochism, Female Spectatorship, and the Femme Fatale in *Fatal Attraction*, *Body of Evidence*, and *Basic Instinct*', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 35, no. 4, (2008): 178.

that ‘psychoanalysis ignores (among other things) that consumer culture bends to no process other than those of the market’.[161] Bordo contends that other reasons for the structure of images or narratives exist rather than just the audience. However, Raeann Ritland reasons that since ‘a dominant patriarchal society would naturally influence the market … Mulvey’s assertions would likely hold’.[162] Given the male-dominated nature of the newspaper industry between 1890 and 1960, Ritland’s argument makes sense. Similarly, Joanne Hollows states that ‘patriarchal meanings cannot be “removed” from cinema because the very structures and conventions which underpin mainstream cinema are patriarchal’.[163] The male newspaper owners and mostly male editors demonstrate that the structure of the newspaper industry was male-controlled. Looking for evidence in photographs and drawings of the sexualisation of women, as well as any passivity, for example, a male assisting a female player, provides an analysis of how photographers and artists represented female football players. Comparing photographs of female players to those of male footballers also revealed whether newspapers treated women differently.

By accessing a wide variety of digitised newspaper articles, coupled with archival sources, a broad picture of female football players develops. Bruce’s rules of media representation and Mulvey’s male gaze provide a theoretical structure that informs the analysis of newspaper articles about these women. These examples demonstrate that the media response was mostly positive despite women’s encroachment into a masculine domain.

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[161] Susan Bordo, ‘It’s Not the Same for Women’, 13 December 2015, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Its-Not-the-Same-for-Women/234535 (accessed 10 May 2020).
[162] Raeann Ritland, ‘Visual Pleasure from Motherhood: Alyssa Milano Challenging the Male Gaze’, *Media, Culture & Society* 40, no. 8 (2018): 1283.
[163] Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 48.

Structure

This work adopts a thematic approach, within a broadly chronological framework, demonstrating the wide variety of experiences women had while playing football. The examples in Chapter 1 come primarily from the years closest to the sport's formation, while the leagues in Chapter 4 focus mainly on the 1930s and 1940s and Chapter 5 focuses on the philanthropic games that women played in the 1940s and 1950s. Chapter 2 and 3 both cover broader periods from the 1890s until the late-1950s. The starting point of the 1890s is because this decade provides the earliest records of women playing football. Although some newspaper articles hinted at participation in the 1880s and earlier, the reliability and accuracy of these articles are dubious. The thesis ends in 1960, primarily because of a reduction in playing opportunities for women in football by this date, but also because of a significant change in social conditions. Thomas Landy acknowledges that the 1960s was the start of greater social acceptance of women partly due to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.[164] Similarly, Park and others also recognise that 'new feminism' began in the 1960s.[165] Joan Hult, in her history of women's athletics, considers 1960 to 1980 as 'The Age of Revolution'.[166]

Chapter 1, 'Playing for Fun in the Face of Obstacles and Constraints', concentrates on examples of the one-off games that students played, predominantly focusing on the sport's early years between 1892 and 1906. Young women frequently played these games for fun, with no apparent intention to play again. An analysis of these examples demonstrates that especially in these early years, women had to conform to the media's conception of gender norms to play football. A mixed-gender narrative is

[164] Thomas Landy, 'The Colleges in Context', in *Catholic Women's Colleges in America*, ed. Tracy Schier and Cynthia Russett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 73.
[165] Park, 'Contesting the Norm', 731.
[166] Joan Hult, 'The Story of Women's Athletics: Manipulating a Dream 1890-1985', in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. D. Margaret Costa and Sharon Guthrie (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994), 83-107.

analysed in Chapter 2, ‘Playing Alongside and Against Male Players’, which focuses on two main types of games: those involving all-female teams that played against all-male sides, and the female high school students who played alongside male teammates. These extraordinary examples contradict football’s established gender order, yet the media response does not indicate much discontent over these young women’s activities. Chapter 3, ‘Football in Education’, analyses the growing trend, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, towards formal participation in football, and especially the non-contact version, for women in educational establishments. Female physical educators in these years increasingly saw the modified version of the game as one that could encourage greater physical activity amongst the female student population. The professional leagues that entrepreneurs established during the years covered by this thesis are the focus of the analysis in Chapter 4, ‘Women’s Professional Leagues’. Businessmen, and they appear all to have been men, believed that women playing football were a money-making endeavour, and the men’s activities demonstrated highly entrepreneurial approaches. Despite the possibility that these leagues would encroach further onto the male game, media coverage was broadly positive and frequently treated the female players in a similar manner to their male counterparts. The final chapter, ‘A Return to Playing for Fun in the 1940s and 1950s’, revisits women playing football for amusement, although in this case, it was for the entertainment of spectators. It posits that the immediate post-World War II era’s focus on femininity and domesticity meant that most women who played football did so as a form of novelty, and they utilised the sport for philanthropic causes.

Through each chapter, the wide-ranging ways that women played football are the focus: from casual games to competitive leagues, and eventually a return to playing for amusement. Women’s need to change how they played the sport over the decades reflects changing views on gender and the appropriateness of women playing any

activities, let alone football. Each chapter analyses the media's response and the mostly positive newspaper reports. The articles reveal an extraordinary level of acceptance given the importance of the sport for shaping masculinity, coupled with concerns over women's participation in violent activities.

Chapter 1: Playing for Fun in the Face of Obstacles and Constraints

At the start of the twentieth century, the New York-based political satire magazine *Puck* published two drawings of women in footballing poses. Regular cartoonists Albert Levering and Frank Nankivell drew the pictures. Levering's cartoon (Figure 1.1) depicted women in football stances waiting for the beginning of the sales, while Nankivell's illustration (Figure 1.2) showed a feminine football player who had apparently always desired to be slim but was now upset that she 'isn't heavy enough for a full back'.[1] The women waiting for the bargain sales are figures of fun for behaving like football players in their approach towards shopping. A *New York Times* article in 1888 similarly compared the scramble by women in the department stores at Christmas to 'a feminine football match'.[2] Nankivell's young woman finds herself caught between a feminine ideal of slimness and her interest in playing football, but in achieving this ideal, she was fundamentally unsuited to play. These same issues about conforming to social norms and a desire to play football influenced the way that women played the sport in the early years.

Drawings of football games in newspapers frequently included depictions of fashionable female spectators in the foreground, demonstrating the event's social importance.[3] The woman on the left in Nankivell's drawing epitomises the respectable female role in football, one that readers would have fully understood. In both cases, the publications ridicule the possibility of female players as inappropriate or laughable, and both are perfect examples of the appropriate femininity that Toni Bruce identified as a

[1] Albert Levering, '2-98-49-C.-O.-D. – Charge', *Puck*, 8 November 1905, 5; Frank Nankivell, 'Progress', *Puck*, 9 November 1901, 16.
[2] 'Christmas Street Scenes', *New York Times*, 23 December 1888, 10.
[3] Michael Oriard, *The Art of Football: The Early Game in the Golden Age of Illustration* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 8.

persistent rule of media representation. Despite the belief that women should remain feminine which the cartoons articulate, some women in the United States in this period were able to find avenues for playing football.

Figure 1.1: “2–98–49–C.–O.–D. – Charge!”

Figure 1.2: ‘Progress.’

These two cartoons embody the problems that women who wanted to play football faced in the 1890s and early twentieth century: women needed to conform to feminine norms, yet football was a physical, masculine game. Social attitudes about appropriate femininity and masculinity shaped how women were able to play the sport. Football’s importance as a site in which men could demonstrate their orthodox manliness and masculinity in this period constrained women primarily to playing one-off games for their fun and enjoyment, rather than in organised competition.

The examples of women playing football explored here happened during a time of changing roles for women. For most of the nineteenth century, a separate spheres philosophy and the cult of domesticity limited women's legal rights and 'glorified the responsibilities of home'.[4] Within this separate sphere, social norms dictated that white middle- and upper-class women should cultivate 'restraint, compassion, and delicacy rather than aggressiveness, competitiveness and robustness.'[5] However, during the Progressive Era between 1890 and 1920, 'an unprecedented number of women began to find new paths to power and fulfilment' and increasing opportunities in employment and education.[6] For example, in 1870, 15% of women held jobs; by 1920, this percentage had risen to 24% as office work created 'thousands of "respectable" new jobs for women.'[7] During this same time, increasing numbers of women from middle-class families attended higher education establishments, and college-educated women worked in social reform. The ethos of 'social motherhood' took the skills that middle- and upper-class women had earned through their domestic roles and applied them to society.[8] However, these freedoms did not extend to southern white women, who did not have the same opportunities as their northern counterparts.[9]

Increasing opportunities for white middle- and upper-class women to work outside the home, including in social reform, led to a revival of the suffrage movement.[10] In 1890, the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage

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[4] Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 13.
[5] Benjamin Rader, *American Sport from the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Television*, 5th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004).
[6] Karen Manners Smith, 'New Paths to Power: 1890-1920', in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 358.
[7] S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States: 1830-1945* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 105; Dorothy Schneider and Carl Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993), 76.
[8] Kleinberg, *Women in the United States*, 177.
[9] Manners Smith, 'New Paths to Power', 360.
[10] Ellen C. DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 160.

Association merged, resulting in the formation of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, an organisation that welcomed women of all classes.[11] The organisation's leaders adopted the 'same rationale for female suffrage used by proponents of the vote for African-Americans', that voting rights were the foundation of democratic government.[12] Women in the west secured early victories for suffrage, with women in Utah and Wyoming gaining the vote as early as 1870. However, this progress contrasted southern resistance to women's rights because 'many early suffrage advocates had been abolitionists.'[13] Thus geographical differences partly shaped women's progress in these years. Their increasing involvement in previously male-dominated aspects of life explains why some women might have felt there were opportunities to pursue the hypermasculine sport of football.

Outside the realm of politics and the workplace, women began to find other opportunities for increased freedom. More women were leading active lives, and women from the middle and upper classes took up cycling, golfing, boating, and tennis.[14] Donald Mrozek asserts that 'sport served a basic role in the emancipation of women.'[15] Activities like cycling challenged the doctrine of separate spheres 'by offering women a way to escape the physical confines of the home.'[16] Patricia Vertinsky similarly notes that women saw sport as a way of 'freeing themselves from some of the more entrenched and pervasive tenets of the Victorian ideology of

[11] DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights*, 39.
[12] Harriet Sigerman, 'Labourers for Liberty: 1865-1890,' in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 303.
[13] Sigerman, 'Labourers for Liberty', 309-10.
[14] Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era,* 43.
[15] Donald Mrozek, *Sport and American Mentality, 1880-1910* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 137.
[16] Lisa Strange, 'The Bicycle, Women's Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton', *Women's Studies* 31, no. 5 (2002): 616.

femininity.'[17] However, not everybody believed that sport was suitable for all women. For example, physicians primarily directed their concerns about activities like cycling at women from the higher classes in society, those who did not pursue the physically demanding jobs of working-class women.[18]

Historians such as Elliott Gorn, Warren Goldstein, and Susan Cahn explain that women who took part in physically demanding activities in the late nineteenth century were a 'threat to femininity' and even 'threatened the stability of society'.[19] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano link the Gibson Girl's creation in the 1890s with an increase in sporting activity, but explain that 'trouble surfaced as women sought to play sports that looked a lot like boys' games'.[20] The medical community's attitudes towards highly physical activity for women also influenced these female games. Bicycling, golf, and tennis were within 'the acceptable boundaries of physical freedom for women', but when sports, such as interscholastic basketball, became competitive, they 'quickly encountered criticism'.[21] Consequently, educators' moral attitudes regarding competition for women restricted female football games to ones played simply for fun. Baseball had similar connections to masculinity as football and was associated with 'American militarism and global expansion'.[22] Women thus played modified versions of baseball, for example, softball. Softball had 'sexually derogatory nicknames such as "Sissy Ball," "Panty Waist", and "Nancy Ball" ', emphasising that educators considered

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[17] Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 15.
[18] Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 16.
[19] Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 102; Susan Cahn, '"Mannishness", Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sports', in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron de Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 509.
[20] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is not Equal in Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 172.
[21] Benjamin Rader, *American Sports from the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Television*, 5th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 220-1.
[22] Jennifer Ring, 'Invisible Women in America's National Pastime…or, "She's Good. It's History, Man"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37, no. 1 (2013): 59.

it a feminine sport.[23] While young women at the private colleges of Vassar and Smith played baseball, 'Smith administrators apparently looked the other way as long as the players were discreet about their activity.'[24] Women who competed in sports associated with masculinity needed to be restrained and possibly modify the games to make them appropriate.

Educators' and physicians' concern over women's participation in masculine sports meant that those who wanted to play football in the sport's early years found themselves restricted by feminine conventions and, on some occasions, bans by authority figures such as college faculties. When women playing football conformed to feminine ideals, the media demonstrated a certain level of acceptance of their participation; discontent over women playing football was not widespread. Newspapers' positive responses even extended to women from the middle and upper classes, despite the pervasive cult of domesticity that 'drew the line at all that seemed excessively aggressive or competitive'.[25] This lack of extensive concern was due, in part, to the low numbers of women playing the game. Fundamentally, these examples reveal the importance of masculinity to the sport, and how women had to overcome this mindset to conform to wider views on gender. The chapter begins with an initial evaluation of the role of football in American society to provide the context necessary to understand the issues that women who wanted to play football faced. The case studies that follow reveal how women modified their behaviour, and the sport, to find an outlet for their interest in playing football.

[23] Ibid., 62.
[24] Debra Shattuck, 'Bats, Balls, and Books: Baseball and Higher Education for Women at Three Eastern Women's Colleges, 1866-1891', *Journal of Sport History* 19, no. 2 (1992): 105.
[25] Jean Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 143.

‘The Leaders Will Be Disciplined’: Football’s Masculinity versus Appropriate Sports for Women

Codified by Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia University with the formation of the Intercollegiate Football Association in 1876, American football developed in a post-Civil war, industrial America in which newspapers and many public commentators frequently expressed a fear of an increasingly feminised male populace.[26] The end of the Civil War and the closing of the frontier coincided with football’s early years when avenues for men to prove their masculinity in military settings or through pioneering expansion were declining. In a 1902 address for the 25-year celebration of the formation of the state of Colorado, United States President Theodore Roosevelt reflected on the westward spread of the population. He referred to those men who had set up the communities in the west as having ‘positive virtues of resolution, of courage, of indomitable will’ and said that ‘true manhood’ required these qualities.[27] As Michael Kimmel notes, the frontier ‘had been a place where men could achieve their manhood’; consequently, football became a surrogate for this location.[28] Roosevelt also worried about a ‘generation of “mama’s boys” who would one day lead the country’.[29] He explicitly stated in *The Strenuous Life* that ‘[w]e need the iron qualities that must go with true manhood’ to do the work of the country.[30] Sport, especially football, filled this role in a post-frontier period. In a 1903 letter to his son, Roosevelt revelled in the

[26] Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 26.
[27] Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1902), 257.
[28] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61; Scott McQuilkin, ‘Brutality in Football and the Creation of the NCAA: A Codified Moral Compass in Progressive America’, *Sport History Review* 33, no. 1 (2002): 3.
[29] John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 99.
[30] Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, 257.

delight of his child playing football and stated his belief in 'rough, manly sports'.[31] Football's masculine connotations left little opportunity for women to take part; hence, those who attempted to play the sport in these years found that they needed to adhere to some requirements of orthodox femininity to reduce public concern.

The increasing numbers of immigrants entering the United States from the 1870s onwards combined with urbanisation and industrialisation to create 'a new sense of an oppressively crowded, depersonalised, and often emasculated life'.[32] The thousands of immigrants from Europe included those 'not well received' by most of society, for example, Jews and Italian peasants.[33] The population increased 26.6% between 1860 and 1870 at a time when Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory became increasingly familiar in popular discourse: 'the image of the athlete in a brutal football fight to the finish was in keeping with the Darwinian concept of "survival of the fittest" '.[34] The upper middle class who had attended the Eastern colleges, the very establishments where football initially took hold, feared that 'masculinity and masculine values were being lost in the new more feminine, more urban society'.[35] In this setting, football was an avenue for demonstrating heteronormative masculinity, making women's participation potentially intolerable.

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[31] Theodore Roosevelt, 'Letter to Theodore Roosevelt Junior, 4 October 1903', in *The Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. H. W. Brands (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007), 329-331.
[32] Roberta Park, '"Soldiers May Fall but Athletes Never!": Sport as an Antidote to Nervous Diseases and National Decline in America, 1865-1905', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 6 (2012): 799; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 58.
[33] Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, 4th edn (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 44.
[34] The United States Census Bureau, '1870 Fast Facts', https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1870_fast_facts.html (accessed 28 April 2017); Ronald Smith, 'American Football Becomes the Dominant Intercollegiate National Pastime', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 114.
[35] Smith, 'American Football Becomes the Dominant Intercollegiate National Pastime', 115.

Fears over emasculation and feminisation were mainly the concern of white American-born men due to the increase in immigrant men who 'seemed to possess a virility and vitality which decadent white middle-class men had lost', although these fears divided along class lines.[36] While the middle and upper classes found team sports, especially football, an antidote to worries about the feminisation of men, the working class were able to establish their masculinity differently. According to Kimmel, key sites for the working class to demonstrate their manliness included billiard halls and saloons. Drinking together in these venues allowed men to gather away from the influence of women who might, in Kimmel's view, symbolically emasculate them in the home.[37] Working-class men were also able to get away from work, with its requirement for compliance to managers and obedience to rules, as participants and spectators in sports such as boxing.[38] The masculine ideal required 'enemies' for contrast and publications such as the *National Police Gazette* sensationalised these individuals. These people included those on the fringes of society. Guy Reel notes that some people at the time believed that criminals, Jews, African Americans, Chinese immigrants, and 'sexual deviants', including homosexuals, 'reflected poorly on [prevailing notions of] modern masculinity'.[39] The medical profession studied homosexuality as a disease, while the media linked it with effeminacy: in both cases, scientists and the mass media perceived it to be a threat to manliness.[40] The Eastern elite were concerned that the white, Anglo-Saxon male had become effete; thus, these other groups, including the working-class and immigrants, did not need to demonstrate

[36] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization. A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 14.
[37] Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 106.
[38] Ibid., 118.
[39] Guy Reel, *The National Police Gazette and the Making of the Modern American Man, 1879-1906* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 9.
[40] Ibid., 92.

masculinity in the same manner.[41] The new job roles accompanying the later stages of the industrial revolution, from the early 1870s onwards, meant that for the first time middle-class workers were no longer entrepreneurs working for themselves, but subordinates to managers.[42] These men also had little chance to be as active as they had been in previous job roles, leaving them with fewer opportunities to demonstrate their physical ability.[43]

Contemporary medical opinions were central to popular discourses about masculinity and femininity and contributed to football's emphasis on manliness. By the 1880s, physicians were increasingly fearful of neurasthenia, a nervous disease caused, they believed, by excessive brainwork. Bederman noted that some people at the time claimed that 'civilization's demands on men's nerve force had left their bodies positively effeminate', creating an environment where protecting middle- and upper-class men's masculinity was important.[44] Neurasthenia was a concern for these higher classes, as the medical community assumed that the lower classes were less susceptible because of their physical job roles.[45] George Beard, who coined the term neurasthenia in 1869, wrote two books on the matter, *American Nervousness* in 1881 and *Sexual Neurasthenia* in 1884. He claimed that neurasthenia masculinised women and feminised men, and noted that instances of the disease were higher 'among the in-door-living and brain working classes', and therefore, the middle-class white male.[46] English philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer's arguments in *Principles of*

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[41] Steven Riess, 'Sport and the Redefinition of American Middle-Class Masculinity', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 8, no. 1 (1991): 16.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 4.
[44] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 87.
[45] Park, 'Soldiers May Fall', 795.
[46] George Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 97.

Biology of 1864 also contributed to this debate. This text first used the phrase 'survival of the fittest' and suggested that children would inherit weaknesses from their fathers, leading to the deterioration of the race.[47] At a time when Darwinism was becoming increasingly influential in the United States, football, with its violence and requirement for toughness, was the ideal sport for men to prove their strength and fitness.

Medical professionals held differing opinions over the benefit of football to curing neurasthenia. In 1898, for example, physician Morton Prince argued that football players would not suffer neurasthenia as they were better prepared both physically and mentally than some soldiers in the military who suffered from 'shock and strain'.[48] Football was thus a means through which some doctors believed that neurasthenia could be cured, and consequently, in their view, lead to the development of a stronger race. However, Samuel Webber, a neurologist, asserted in 1895 that gymnastics was a good cure for neurasthenia, but that it must not be excessively physical. The concern that rough sports could not treat neurasthenia would have limited football's use as a cure for the disease.

In the context of these medical debates, which touched on eugenics at times, the highly violent, new game of football became the ultimate peacetime proving ground for young men to demonstrate their manliness and develop the skills necessary for war and leadership. The sport's brutal nature was not an issue for Theodore Roosevelt, who led the Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War of 1898 before embarking on his political career. Roosevelt believed that football required roughness. In a letter to Walter Camp, the famed Yale coach and American Football Rules Committee member, Roosevelt wrote that 'I do not give a snap for a good man who can't fight and hold his

[47] Park, 'Soldiers May Fall', 799.
[48] Ibid., 805.

own in the world'. He also stated that football's 'rough play, if confined within manly and honorable limits, is an advantage'.[49] Football was also an alternative to war, providing an avenue for young men to 'demonstrate the manly courage that their fathers and older brothers had recently proved on the bloody battlefields of the Civil War'.[50] The *Saturday Evening Post*, shortly after the Spanish-American War, stated that 'the capacity to take hard knocks which belongs to a successful football player is usually associated with the qualities that would enable a man to lead a charge up San Juan Hill', demonstrating the author's belief that football could provide the skills necessary for war.[51]

Camp also made comparisons between football and war, but he emphasised the tactical and intellectual requirements rather than its physical nature.[52] Camp and Lorin Deland even stated that 'brains will always win over muscle'.[53] The need for violence in the sport and its role in making leaders of society would have made women's participation difficult to tolerate by football authorities. However, the emphasis on the tactical, rather than the physical, helps explain why some women were able to play. Camp saw football as a training ground for future leaders: 'If ever a sport offered inducements to the man of executive ability, to the man who can plan, foresee, and manage, it is certainly the modern American football.'[54] Writing in America's oldest literary magazine, the *North American Review*, Unitarian minister Abiel Livermore argued that colleges should incorporate athletic sports and physical education because graduates were 'a pale cadaverous, and prematurely aged set of youths' who

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[49] Theodore Roosevelt, 'Letter to Walter Camp, 11 March 1895', in *The Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. H. W. Brands (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007), 99-100.
[50] Allen Guttmann, 'Civilised Mayhem: Origins and Early Development of American Football', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media Politics* 9, no. 4 (2006): 535.
[51] 'Why Football is Popular', *Saturday Evening Post* 171, no. 21 (1898): 330.
[52] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 42.
[53] Walter Camp and Lorin F. Deland, *Football* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896), iv.
[54] Walter Camp, *American Football* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896), 215.

demonstrated a 'pallid effeminacy'.[55] He also stated that 'physical stamina' was in danger amongst the classes 'addicted to [the] professional, mercantile, and sedentary life'.[56] His assumed exclusions of lower classes reveal much about contemporary hegemonic standards of masculinity. Similarly, J. William White, a Philadelphia physician, wrote in *Lippincott's Magazine* that 'the manly games and sports in which for centuries it has been the pride of the Anglo-Saxon race to excel' were essential for male collegiate students.[57] Businessman W. Cameron Forbes, in a 1900 article in *Outing*, viewed football's danger and physical contact as necessary when he argued:

> The bodily contact, the fierce struggle of man to man in the rush line, and man to man in the tackling and interference must stay, or the essence of the game will be lost. Football is the expression of the strength of the Anglo-Saxon. It is the dominant spirit of a dominant race.[58]

These fears were most noticeable amongst white men rather than other races and ethnicities, and football's violence was an essential means of establishing racial dominance as much as masculinity.

By contrast, middle-class white women remained tied to a myth of female frailty that had its roots in nineteenth-century medical discourse. Edward Clarke, a physician and Harvard professor, believed that women who 'neglected and mismanaged' the 'set of organs peculiar to herself' could cause weakness and disease and ultimately affect the race, which would be 'propagated from its inferior classes'.[59] Herbert Spencer believed that women not only had less energy than men but also lost it more quickly — energy

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[55] Abiel Livermore, 'Gymnastics', *The North American Review* 81, no. 168 (1855): 65.
[56] Ibid., 67.
[57] Park, 'Soldiers May Fall', 803.
[58] William Cameron Forbes, 'The Football Coach's Relation to the Players', *Outing* 37, no. 3 (1900): 339.
[59] Edward Clarke, *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for Girls*, 2nd edn (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873), 33.

required for the vital function of motherhood.[60] Similarly, Dr Howard, from Baltimore, believed that any exercise that 'causes undue psychic excitement' was too much for the 'nerve-tensioned American girl'.[61] Commentators such as these felt that women's vital role of motherhood was under threat from sports that were too strenuous, and this concern limited women's opportunities to take part in a game as physical as football.

Against this narrative of a protected and sedentary life for middle-class women, the emergence of the 'New Woman' in the 1890s provided an image of a modern woman who could engage in more physical activity than in previous years. The term 'New Woman' appeared in 1894 alongside the 'first folio printing of Charles Dana Gibson's work'.[62] The kind of young women whom newspapers represented as archetypes of the New Woman lived active lives, swimming, playing golf and tennis, and riding horses.[63] The popular press was ambivalent on precisely who she was: they either portrayed her as an 'unattractive, browbeating usurper of traditionally masculine roles', or praised her as an independent, progressive American girl.[64] Margaret Murray Washington, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, and others depicted her in fiction, and Gibson drew her.[65] Her image appeared in magazines and theatre productions and on 'calendars, decorator plates, postcards, … dresser sets, brooches, flasks and cigarette cases'.[66] In 1895, *Life* applied this model to football by publishing Gibson's cartoon titled 'The Coming Game: Yale versus Vassar' (Figure 1.3) which newspapers across the country subsequently reprinted. The *San Francisco Call*, for example, reproduced it, locating it prominently at

[60] Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 47.
[61] Ibid., 56.
[62] Martha Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 22.
[63] Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era*, 16.
[64] Patterson, *Beyond the Gibson Girl*, 2.
[65] Ibid., 4.
[66] Ibid., 33.

the top of the front page.[67] Gibson's cartoon articulates male unease about women's increasing influence. The female players appear confident and are in a position of power as they surge forward, while the male player appears smaller in comparison with his hand up as if to stem the flow of the advancing women. Gibson does not overtly sexualise the women; they are fully clothed and dressed in bloomers. There is no evidence here of Laura Mulvey's male gaze with its emphasis on women as 'passive object[s] of sexual desire'.[68] They are neither sexualised nor passive as they dominate the young man. Gibson depicts one woman in a stereotypically feminine pose of fixing her hair, thus conforming to some female stereotypes about women's concern about their appearances, but she is in the minority in an otherwise active cameo.

Figure 1.3: 'Threatened by the New Woman – The Coming Game, Yale Versus Vassar.'

[67] Charles Gibson, 'Threatened by the New Woman – The Coming Game, Yale Versus Vassar', *San Francisco Call*, 24 November 1895, 1.
[68] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.

‘The Gibson Girl’ portrayed the New Woman taking part in sports. She was athletic and energetic and appeared in numerous publications playing a variety of games. One version of the Gibson Girl was the ‘Football Girl’, although she was not a player but a spectator, representing women’s conventional football role.[69] An 1895 article in the *Saint Paul Daily Globe* highlighted orthodox concerns about gender roles by asserting that women who played football would not make good wives.[70] The New Woman usually played individual sports rather than team-based ones, and contemporary books reflected this. For example, Lucille Hill’s 1903 *Athletics and Out-door Sports for Women* dedicated 16 chapters to suitable sports for women. Only three of these chapters — on field hockey, basketball, and rowing — dealt with team sports.[71] Similarly, physical educators Helen McKinstry and Luther Gulick, along with fitness pioneer Dudley Allen Sargent, all believed that women should not participate in competitive contact sport and that individual activities such as swimming, archery, tennis, and golf were more appropriate.[72]

Women’s participation in sport at this time, and its relative acceptance, divided along class lines. While medical experts were concerned that middle- and upper-class women remained feminine and took part in genteel sports, this was not true for the working class. Women from the lower classes were able to take part in physically demanding activities such as pugilism, endurance walks, and cycling, and professional cowgirls participated in Wild West shows in the 1880s.[73] Roberta Park refers to female

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[69] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 263.
[70] ‘Women Players Not Wives’, *Saint Paul Daily Globe* (Saint Paul, MN), 18 November 1895, 4.
[71] Lucille Hill, ed., *Athletics and Out-Door Sports for Women: Each Subject Being Separately Treated by a Special Writer* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), contents page.
[72] Putney, *Muscular Christianity*, 49.
[73] Gerald Gems, Linda Borish, and Gertrud Pfister, *Sports in American History: From Colonisation to Globalisation* (Chicago: Human Kinetics, 2008), 165; Mary Lou LeCompte, ‘Cowgirls at the Crossroads: Women in Professional Rodeo, 1885-1922’, *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 20, no. 2 (1989): 27.

wrestlers and boxers as ‘performing’, which suggests that entertainment was an essential element of women’s participation in these violent and physically demanding sports.[74] Similarly, Bessie Coleman, the first female African-American pilot, felt that she needed to be an entertainer to help secure financial backing for her flying.[75] Thus, not only did the media represent women’s sporting activity as entertainment, but women also needed to promote their accomplishments in this manner to take part in their chosen events.

Simultaneously, the popular press and advertisers made a new link between female beauty and physical activity. Physical educators also promoted the athletic body as increasingly fashionable, encouraging female participation in sport, although societal acceptance rested on the assumption that women remained feminine.[76] Anne O’Hagan, a journalist who frequently wrote on feminist issues, declared in a 1901 article in *Munsey’s Magazine* that, except for better legal status for women, ‘their entrance into the realm of sports is the most cheering thing that has happened to them in the century just past’. O’Hagan believed that this development was positive because of sport’s health benefits and the ‘gradual disappearance of the swooning damsel of old romance’.[77] While medical opinion favoured passivity, some people saw the benefit of women taking part in sport, albeit this was a minority feminist view.

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[74] Roberta Park, ‘Contesting the Norm: Women and Professional Sports in Late Nineteenth Century America’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 5 (2012): 732.
[75] Bieke Gils, ‘Bessie Coleman: The Only Race Aviatrix in the World’, in *Before Jackie Robinson: The Transcendent Role of Black Sporting Pioneers*, ed. Gerald Gems (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 124.
[76] Patricia Vertinsky, ‘Body Shapes: The Role of Medical Establishment in Informing Female Exercise and Physical Education in Nineteenth-Century North America’, in *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 260; McDonagh and Pappano, *Playing with the Boys*, 171.
[77] Anne O’Hagan, ‘The Athletic Girl’, *Munsey’s Magazine*, 25 August 1901, 730.

Women were occasionally able to play team sports, but mostly if they only played for fun. Middle- and upper-class women initially played games such as baseball in the women's colleges and in exclusive clubs where heavy clothing, which restricted movement, ensured that they could not be excessively physical.[78] When women attempted to form leagues and play competitively, they met intense criticism from the press as they crossed into a male territory in taking up the 'national pastime'.[79] Both the *New York Times* and *Sporting Life* criticised competitive female baseball players, referring to them as 'inept' or 'The Female Tramps'.[80] These women violated the era's standards of appropriate femininity by taking part in sporting competition.[81] The ideal characteristics for Victorian women were: 'nurturance, intuitive morality, domesticity, passivity, and affection'.[82] Consequently, women playing football must have felt a clear need to maintain these standards.

Despite football's popularity as a site for promoting masculinity, it suffered from accusations of excessive violence and even faced proscription. Late-nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines frequently reported the deaths associated with the sport; in 1894, for example, Philadelphia's *Medical News* reported 14 injuries and four deaths from the Thanksgiving Day games alone.[83] Many authors cite the Harvard versus Yale game that same year as one of the most violent in the sport's history, with John Sayle Watterson referring to the match's 'notoriety'.[84] Despite the absence of

[78] Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 21-23.
[79] Park, 'Contesting the Norm', 742.
[80] Ibid., 743.
[81] Rader, *American Sports from the Age of Folk Games*, 31.
[82] Carol Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and their Role in Nineteenth-Century America', in *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras*, ed. J. A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 14.
[83] Roberta Park, 'Mended or Ended? Football Injuries and the British and American Medical Press, 1870-1910', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, no. 2 (2001): 123.
[84] Dave Revsine, *The Opening Kick-Off: The Tumultuous Birth of a Football Nation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 40; Watterson, *College Football*, 37.

fatalities in this game, unlike the contest between Georgetown and the Columbia Athletic Club, the fact that six players in the Harvard versus Yale match had to go to the hospital reveals its violence. Reporters perceived the Yale captain's late hit on a Harvard player as a vicious assault, further highlighting the match's brutality.[85] When Charles Eliot, the Harvard President, called for the abolition of football, Camp responded with a defence of the game in *Football Facts and Figures* in which he used statistics and faculty letters of support to counter the argument that the sport was too violent.[86] The situation worsened in 1897 following the death of University of Georgia player Richard Gammon in a game against Virginia. Gammon's teammates met the day after his death and decided to disband the team, the very same day that the Georgia Senate proposed a bill to make football games illegal and fine anyone who attempted to play.[87] William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* devoted the front page to football violence a week after Gammon's death, with a call to criminalise the sport.[88] However, Georgia Governor William Atkinson vetoed the bill after Gammon's mother wrote a letter calling for the sport to remain legal.[89] Football thus faced significant problems despite its popularity.

Women wishing to play football were caught up in these broader concerns over the sport's violence. For example, in 1899 the Delaware-based *Evening Journal* reported on young men from Salem, New Jersey, who had set up a football team to the dismay of locals who declared 'it to be worse than prize-fighting'.[90] Further outrage ensued when the author commented that girls from the local high school had also started to

[85] 'No Charges Against Hinkey', *The Harvard Crimson* (Cambridge, MA), 17 December 1894, n.p.
[86] Walter Camp, *Football Facts and Figures* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1894).
[87] Revsine, *The Opening Kick-Off*, 95.
[88] Ibid., 103.
[89] Ibid., 95.
[90] 'Girls Played Football', *Evening Journal* (Wilmington, DE), 31 October 1899, 3.

play. The article stated that the girls practised for several days until 'some of them became so proficient that they lined up in front of the young men of the school … and prevented them from scoring'.[91] The author's claim that 'this is not the worst of it, for some of the girls have caught the football fever' suggests the girls' participation was of more concern than the boys, although the report provided no statement as to why this was the case. Here the primary issue was that anyone was playing football, not just that it was young women who wanted to play.

Various groups restricted women's opportunities to play football. Social norms and the sport's violent underpinnings led some school principals to ban the sport. Educators faced a difficult time as they confronted the differing opinions of the era. While physical activity was associated with the modern woman, as seen in depictions of the Gibson Girl, some physical educators believed that rough sports made women too masculine.[92] In 1895, the *Pike County Press* reported on rumours of young women playing football at the local Normal school. The principal and trustees were concerned about the publication of a line-cut drawing in an illustrated newspaper which depicted girls from the school playing football. Despite the author's claim that 'no one with any degree of common sense would believe such a thing', the drawing angered the school management to the extent that they threatened legal action against the newspaper if it did not retract the article.[93] The belief that no one with any 'common sense' would believe it further elucidates the commonly held perceptions of the time that women did not, and should not, play football. The article did not mention if the girls intended to modify the sport in any way to reduce the violence, which could explain why newspaper

[91] Ibid.
[92] Robert Pruter, *The Rise of the American High School and the Search for Control, 1880-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 147; Robin Markels, 'Bloomer Basketball and Its Suspender Suspension: Women's Intercollegiate Competition at Ohio State, 1904-1907', *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 1 (2000): 41.
[93] 'An Infamous Picture', *Pike County Press* (Milford, PA), 22 November 1895, 1.

reporters and the school's leaders were so concerned. A series of articles in 1899 reported on the female students of Sayre Institute and McElhinney High School in Kentucky. They planned to organise a game of football but had to play in secret after the principals banned the proposed match. A reporter for the *Topeka Daily State Journal* stated that the girls were from 'the best families in the state' and they would contest 'on the gridiron next Saturday'.[94] However, both the *Grand Forks Daily Herald* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* printed the same article, stating that the two schools' principals cancelled the game and 'the leaders will be disciplined'.[95] The editor of the *Grand Forks Daily Herald* put this story on its front page amongst news about Britain's war in Africa and other stories of national significance. Newspapers in Georgia, Kansas, North Dakota, and Ohio all printed the article, which indicates a broader interest in the event and perhaps in women's attempts to play football in general.[96] A four-line report in the *Paducah Sun* summarised some of the concerns about women playing football: 'The girls' football team has been disbanded …. They decided to adopt a game more becoming to young ladies', although it did not mention what this new activity was.[97] That these young women came from 'the best families in the state' seemed to hamper them in their endeavour to play football. Educators' strength of belief in appropriate activities for women of particular social classes meant that some games never took place.

While women playing football contravened the era's standards of femininity, some articles combined concern with praise for young women's endeavours. For example, the *Jackson Daily Citizen* emphasised locals' shock in an 1897 report that referred to

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[94] 'Women to Play Football', *Topeka Daily State Journal* (Topeka, KS), 19 December 1899, 2.
[95] 'No Game', *Grand Forks Daily Herald* (Grand Forks, ND), 20 December 1899, 1; 'Games Declared Off', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 20 December 1899, 4.
[96] 'Girls Will Play Football', *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 December 1899, 2; 'Women to Play Football', 2; 'No Game', 1; 'Games Declared Off', 4.
[97] No title, *Paducah Sun* (Paducah, KY), 30 October 1901, 4.

the students of the 'eminently respectable' St Johnsbury female seminary in Vermont who had begun practising football. The author stated that it was 'positively awful' and that '[h]ere was absolute defiance of all the social and community ethics that could ever be compiled.'[98] The story also mentioned the townspeople's 'lamentations and dire forebodings' to highlight the point. Yet the article ended with some faint praise for the players' 'heroism' in taking part and an acknowledgement that of all the girls playing football across the country, 'none of them can kick the ball any better than the St. Johnsbury girls'.[99] The *Jackson Daily Citizen* and the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* printed the same article, demonstrating widespread media interest.[100] However, no evidence exists to suggest that any games resulted from this endeavour. The combination of horror and praise was also evident in a 1912 article in the *Nashville Tennessean* regarding women playing football in Chicago. While the reporter commented that 'I do not approve of the fair sex playing football' because of the risk of injury, the article continued 'it is no more strenuous or dangerous a game than basket ball [sic]'.[101] This contention seems erroneous given the modifications made to basketball to make it suitable for women. These examples demonstrate authority figures' concern over the appropriateness of young women playing football which newspaper reports articulated.

Women faced restrictions on their desire to play football from educators as well as from organisations related to women's sports. For example, an 1893 article in San Francisco's *Morning Call* suggested that for university students, including women, 'nothing is a better antidote for severe mental gymnastics than active physical exercise'. The author reported that the female students at Palo Alto 'do not see why

[98] 'Football and Bloomers', *Jackson Daily Citizen* (Jackson, MI), 5 February 1897, 3.
[99] 'Football and Bloomers', *Wichita Daily Eagle* (Wichita, KS), 28 January 1897, 8.
[100] 'Football and Bloomers', 3; 'The Bloomer and the Football', *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 28 December 1898, 8.
[101] 'Women Have At Last Taken Up Football', *Nashville Tennessean*, 31 December 1912, 10.

girls should be debarred from playing football', suggesting that faculty had prevented them from playing the sport.[102] In the 1920s, despite an apparent 'golden age' of sport, an anti-competitive movement hampered woman wanting to play competitive football, especially at educational establishments. For example, in 1926 the *Altoona Tribune* mentioned that the 'women's Division of the Amateur Athletic association [sic] urges a virtual ending of athletic competition for young women' because physical training for individuals was more important than the 'ruthless physical destruction' that women's basketball and football entailed.[103] The article specifically highlighted football and basketball, suggesting that the former was widespread enough to be of significant concern. Wisconsin's state Athletic Association articulated a similar fear and moved to ban female interscholastic competition due to 'improper chaperonage, lax moral discipline and the strain of exciting competition'.[104] Physicality was thus not the primary concern as moral attitudes about competitive games were more important, and some female members of the American Physical Education Association opposed this mode of playing.[105] While Wisconsin's Athletic Association did not specifically mention football, the author of the article provided an example from South Dakota of a female football team which an anonymous source prevented from playing due to 'opposition to interscholastic endeavor by girls'.[106] Similarly, in 1927, female students at New York University requested permission from faculty to play football.[107] The lack of evidence of any such games taking place suggests that the university's authorities denied their request. The conflicting beliefs regarding sport for women, especially activities that required high levels of physicality, left educators stuck between accepting women

[102] 'Beauty and Oars', *Morning Call* (San Francisco, CA), 8 February 1893, 8.
[103] Jimmy Brantlinger, 'Looking 'Em Over', *Altoona Tribune* (Altoona, PA), 14 May 1926, 12.
[104] 'Girl Athletes Denied Interscholastic Tilts', *Indianapolis Star*, 21 November 1925, 42.
[105] Gems, et al, *Sports in American History*, 248.
[106] 'Girl Athletes Denied Interscholastic Tilts', 42.
[107] Joe Williams, 'The Nut Cracker', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 21 October 1927, 15.

playing football and preventing these games from taking place. The restriction on women wanting to play interscholastic football demonstrates that, for many women, acceptance could come only through playing for fun. When women played competitively or took the game too seriously, faculty articulated concern.

While some educators demonstrated alarm over women playing football, the medical community appeared unconcerned, despite the potential for physical harm to players. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* (*JAMA*) frequently reported on the sport's dangers and the injuries that players could suffer. Between 1900 and 1908, for example, the publication included 11 editorials on football-related injuries and deaths. The titles demonstrate their areas of concern including, 'The Football Mortality', 'The Football Fatalities and Injuries of 1903', 'Brutality of Football', 'Football Fatalities' and 'Football Mortality Among Boys'. The seriousness of the situation is evident in the fact that in 1903 alone, the *JAMA* reported on 35 footballing deaths.[108] However, the *JAMA* did not refer to any injuries or fatalities of female players, despite, as discussed below, them occurring. This lack of reporting could be because no one recorded these statistics, because there was a lack of significant enough numbers, or simply because female participation was so rare that it was barely on their radar. The fact that some young women played in secret may also have hampered opportunities to publish all medical issues. Newspapers also frequently reported on severe injuries and deaths and provided lists of the players killed in a given year: in 1905, for example, newspapers mentioned 18 deaths.[109] These statistics were a crucial element of

[108] 'The Football Mortality', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 39, no. 23 (1902): 1464-1465; 'The Football Fatalities and Injuries of 1903', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 42, no. 5, (1904): 316; 'Brutality in Football', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 45, no. 17 (1905): 1251-2; 'Football Fatalities', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 47, no. 14 (1906): 1102; 'Football Mortality Among Boys', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 44, no. 35 (1907): 2088.
[109] '18 on Football Death Roll in Season of 1905', *Minneapolis Journal*, 26 November 1905, 1.

articles, which either reported the violence and injuries or made a special note if a game was injury-free.[110] The newspapers thus used the dangers of football not only as a campaign to change the sport but also as a means to sell more copies, and any female players' deaths would increase this sensationalism.

A young woman's death from football was likely to shock readers more than the reports of male fatalities with which they were familiar. At least three young women died from playing football between 1905 and 1933 and were part of the sport's violence narrative. Newspapers included these young women on their lists of fatalities to emphasise football's danger and increase readers' concern about the activity. For example, in 1905, Bernadette Decker, a Maryland native, died from an unspecified internal injury several days after playing in a girls' football game.[111] In 1924 newspapers reported the death of Ellen May Carr from Syracuse, who died four years after a displaced hip caused by a football injury had triggered further, unspecified, health problems. Carr was playing in her school's park when she was 'thrown heavily to the ground in a scrimmage', dislocating her hip.[112] In 1933, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Wilma Kelly died after playing with a group of children in her neighbourhood when a fractured nose led to an infection that claimed her life.[113] Attributing these deaths to football was, in some cases, tenuous. In Decker's case, at least one newspaper report linked her death to a combination of football and the fact that she 'gathered and ate some chestnuts' a few days before the match.[114] Carr's death occurred four years after her injury and some reports mentioned that she died, in part, due to heart disease, not just her football injury. Despite the role of another medical condition, the headline

[110] Watterson, *College Football*, 37.
[111] 'Football Fatal to Girl', *New York Times*, 3 November 1905, 1.
[112] 'Girl Dies From Old Injury on Gridiron', *Washington Post*, 22 April 1924, S2.
[113] 'Football Deaths Decrease; Only 26 During the Year', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 December 1933, 23.
[114] 'Claims a Girl Victim', *Baltimore Sun*, 3 November 1905, 8.

emphasised only the role of the sport, 'Girl Dies from Old Injury on Gridiron'.[115] The fact that newspapers maintained football's involvement in these deaths emphasises that editors were keen to highlight the sport's violence. Therefore, newspapers probably used these tragedies to increase criticism of the sport as well as circulation numbers.

In some ways, newspapers treated female players similarly to male collegiate players when it came to reporting football's deaths. Some journalists included Decker on their lists of football fatalities: for example, the *Minneapolis Journal* categorised their list of 1905's 18 football deaths as ten high school players, four collegiate players, one 'girl player', and three others.[116] Newspapers thus considered Decker as much a football player as the others listed, but her inclusion was also a form of sensationalism. The *Los Angeles Herald* stated that she was 'considered one of the best female athletes in Maryland' and placed the article on the front page, demonstrating its importance.[117] Reporters keenly noted her family background, further demonstrating that young women from the middle and upper classes played football. The *Baltimore Sun* noted that she was from a good family, her father was a Justice in Allegany County, and that she 'was a girl of fine physique'.[118] Similarly, in 1933, newspapers included Wilma Kelly of Helena, Montana, amongst the 26 football-related deaths.[119]

Women were being injured and even killed playing football, yet medical journals such as the *JAMA* did not appear to be concerned, even in these latter instances. For example, in 1924 the *JAMA* did not include any articles that demonstrated concern over football violence despite Carr's death. By the 1930s the Association's anxiety was

[115] 'Girl Dies From Old Injury on Gridiron', S2.
[116] '18 on Football Death Roll in Season of 1905', 1.
[117] 'Girl Meets Death in Football Game', *Los Angeles Herald*, 3 November 1905, 1.
[118] 'Claims a Girl Victim', 8.
[119] 'Girl Dies From Old Injury on Gridiron', S2; 'Football Deaths Decrease; Only 26 During the Year', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 7 December 1933, 23.

evident in the title of reports such as 'Football Fatalities', 'Football Fatalities of 1932', and 'Analysis of Football Injuries', yet none reported on women.[120] The relatively few female games in comparison to male matches, and the limited media coverage of those that did take place, meant that women were not the *JAMA*'s primary concern over the sport's violence.

Despite these fears, some people supported the idea of women playing football. In 1885, for example, the *New York Times* reported on the Twilight Club, a dinner club where members discussed topical issues, and their debate on 'How girls should be trained'. One male member, who was a doctor, stated that there was no reason why women could not play the same sports as men and that 'Vassar might just as well play football as the boys at Princeton'.[121] The *Watertown Herald* referred to these comments as a 'reckless display of mingled ignorance' and disagreed vehemently with the idea of women playing football.[122] Others believed that female players would struggle with only some aspects of the sport. For example, Professor Magee from the Department of Physical Culture at the University of California stated in 1899 that women might be physically able to play football, but that they were not mentally capable. He believed that women could not 'play a game that requires entire disregard of others'.[123] This comment highlights some contemporary beliefs that women were supposed to be nurturing and caring, and that this characteristic would prevent them from playing football. Yet, it also indicates that some people had few issues in allowing women to play the sport. Ambivalence and debate were common in these years.

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[120] 'Football Fatalities', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 97, no. 24 (1931): 1802; 'Football Fatalities of 1932', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 99, no. 26 (1932): 2186-7; Thomas Horan, 'Analysis of Football Injuries', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 103, no. 5 (1934): 325-7.
[121] 'How Girls Should be Trained', *New York Times*, 6 March 1885, 8.
[122] 'Presumptive Ignorance', *Watertown Herald* (Watertown, NY), 16 August 1890, n.p.
[123] 'Women Are Not Mentally Able to Play Football', *San Francisco Call*, 9 April 1899, 24.

Football in its early years was a means through which young men were able to assert their masculinity. In popular discourse it was a replacement for war and a method of creating leaders in society, which restricted women's participation in the sport. These roles, coupled with medical professionals' and educators' attitudes about women's frailty and the sport's inherent violence, meant that restrictions and bans hampered many women who wanted to play football. Frequently, educators' and physicians' anxieties over women's participation rested on the appropriate behaviour that social norms dictated that women demonstrate. Thus, a potential way that women could take part in sport was if they conformed to these ideals. The women in these examples played football outside of leagues or formal competitions. They played for fun and their amusement. In doing so, they did not present a threat to the highly competitive masculine version of the game.

'Sprightly and Pretty Young Ladies': Players Conforming to Conventional Notions of Propriety and Femininity

In 1892, the Philadelphia *Morning Star* reported that schoolgirls from Rockford, Illinois, were to play a game of football in a few days but 'the portals [would] be guarded with jealous care, and the door … shut to all but the participants'.[124] While the article did not explicitly state if anyone physically guarded the doors, it was clear that the girls wanted to prevent others from seeing them play. However, despite its supposedly secretive nature, the press widely reported the game. A journalist for Philadelphia's *Morning Star* claimed that they managed to interview some of the participants and quoted a player who declared it would be 'awful' for anyone to see the game as they 'only play for the fun of it'. The girls seem to have been aware of contemporary feminine sensibilities, and the reporter referred to the players as 'petticoated school girls' and 'sprightly and

[124] 'The High Kickers Are In It', *Morning Star* (Philadelphia, PA), 15 November 1892, n.p.

pretty young ladies' to help ensure that readers did not question their femininity. The reporter called the game a kind of 'comic opera', articulating hilarity in the thought of the girls playing football.[125] Despite the reporter's incredulity and antipathy, the article revealed some crucial means through which women could find an avenue for playing football. Firstly, by playing in secret away from male eyes; and secondly, by ensuring that they played in a way that did not compromise social norms about stereotypical femininity. The players also made it clear that they were only taking part for fun and were not a threat to the male game. Although not evident in this article, women also modified the sport to increase their chances of being able to play. In an era when conventional notions of femininity limited women's opportunities to play highly violent sports like football, some women found various ways to ensure that they still adhered to the era's standards of appropriate behaviour when they played.

Women were able to avoid scrutiny by anyone in authority, and unwanted male attention, by playing in secret. Taking part in sport away from public view was a common ploy by young women in the second half of the nineteenth century to enable them to participate in a variety of ball games, including baseball, and football was no different.[126] The vast majority of these secret football games occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first few years of the twentieth century. Many of the women who took part in these games came from the middle and upper classes and played them in high schools and colleges. College education allowed predominantly middle- and upper-class women the time and space to play.[127] Similarly, high schools,

[125] Ibid.
[126] Debra Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 45.
[127] Williams, *A Beautiful Game*, 49.

especially in the early years, targeted the best graduates from grammar and primary schools and served society's elite.[128]

The medical community's concern over the health of women in higher education placed pressure on physical educators in the late nineteenth century. This unease led female students to hide their activities from the very staff who were encouraging them to participate, albeit in a limited sense, in physical exercise. These educationalists believed that sport could increase women's independence and self-reliance. However, these same instructors also needed to protect their profession and prevent women from taking part in games popularly perceived as masculine that might have 'physical and moral dangers'.[129] These educationalists also differed in their beliefs regarding female sport: while some saw athletic activities as a representation of the New Woman, others still associated sport with masculinity.[130] At Smith College in the mid-1880s, for example, staff concerned by books such as Clarke's *Sex in Education* sought to protect students' health through genteel exercises. When women did take part in perceived masculine sports such as baseball, the staff tolerated it as long as players staged the game discreetly.[131]

However, not all educators accepted young women taking part in masculine sports. For example, in Ohio in 1899, girls apparently intended to return to playing basketball after a teacher overheard them practising football in secret. The players from the school's male football team had tutored the girls of Central High School in the arts of tackling, kicking, and the flying wedge.[132] The prospect of girls playing football was clearly not

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[128] John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling*, 4th edn (New York: Routledge, 2013), 85-6.
[129] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 23.
[130] Pruter, *The Rise of American High School*, 147.
[131] Shattuck, 'Bats, Balls and Books', 104; Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, 112.
[132] 'May Basket Ball', *Topeka Daily State Journal* (Topeka, KS), 25 December 1899, 7.

acceptable to the teacher who discovered them and reported them to school authorities. The journalist covering the story made no mention of what was going to happen to the girls, or to the members of the boy's team who helped them. None of the newspaper reports indicate any particular media outrage at the prospect of these young women playing football. Similarly, in Michigan in 1903, female students in Ann Arbor considered their 'mock football game' risqué enough that they played without their Physical Director's knowledge.[133] While the media articulated little concern about young women playing football, the players were aware that their instructors would prevent such games. These matches played in secret, or as a 'mock' contest, were often only for the participants' amusement. They demonstrate no desire on the part of the players to take part for competitive reasons, which likely prevented widespread media uproar.

It was not only their teachers from whom these pioneering young women wished to hide their games. Reports indicate that the female students playing football were also worried that men might watch them, a reflection of educators' attitudes about the morality of women playing sport in public. Sports, especially those deemed masculine, were respectable only if played in private and in appropriate dress. Women who played in public, such as the working-class women who played baseball in the 1860s, 'invited male gaze and sexual desire'.[134] Marilyn Cohen provides no evidence that the female baseball players actively sought this response, but she suggests that by merely participating in public, in front of male crowds, the players would have been aware that they would attract such attention. This attitude informed some intercollegiate plans such as Berkeley accepting Stanford's 1896 invitation for a women's basketball match

[133] 'Michigan Girl Twists Neck While Playing Football', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 December 1903, 4.
[134] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 23.

on the condition that the audience was female.[135] While women's competitive activities were slowly becoming increasingly acceptable in the late nineteenth century, playing in front of men pushed the boundaries of what educators and journalists considered tolerable. The *Saint Paul Daily Globe*, in a six-line article in 1895, highlighted the implication that female athleticism reduced women's heterosexual appeal to men. The report questioned whether the female students at Wellesley College, who newspapers had suggested were playing football, would make good wives.[136] Clearly, women who played football were not conforming to orthodox feminine roles. These issues explain why these women and girls tried to hide their games from male view. For example, in 1903, girls from Oak Park High School in Chicago played a game on a vacant lot, but they swiftly abandoned the match when a man passed by them.[137] Similarly, in 1906, female students of Washburn College, Kansas, camped overnight in a tent on the college campus and in the early morning headed to the athletic park and lined up for kick-off.[138] The game came to a swift halt when one of the players spotted a man watching the game. The players fled the field and headed back to their tent. In both cases, the participants were keenly aware of the sensibilities to which they had to adhere.

While most reports highlighted that players aimed for complete secrecy, some articles suggested that participants occasionally permitted some spectators, indicating an element of social acceptability. For example, '[o]nly a few lady friends' viewed a game played between female students at Misses Carter's School for Young Ladies in

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[135] Mandy Treagus, 'Playing Like Ladies: Basketball, Netball, and Feminine Restraint', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 1 (2005): 93.
[136] No title, *Saint Paul Daily Globe* (Saint Paul, MN), 18 November 1895, 4.
[137] 'Girls Have Football Game', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 November 1903, 7.
[138] 'Girls Played Football in Padded Suits', *Topeka Daily Capital* (Topeka, KS), 31 August 1906, 7.

Catonsville, Maryland, in 1894.[139] Similarly, in Washington DC in 1895, some girls from 'one of the swellest gymnasiums' in the city decided to organise a game of football, having become bored by basketball. The players hid their intentions by making it appear as though they were going on a picnic, carrying parasols, and hiding the football in a basket.[140] The newspaper's descriptions of the girls as 'demure maidens, apt pupils' emphasised that while they played football, they still adhered to some appropriate behaviour. The involvement of an unnamed referee indicates that the players were taking the event somewhat seriously despite the brevity of the 15-minute contest. The article finished by stating that the girls wished to play again once they had gained in skills, but only in the presence of friends and family. In 1895, the girls of Lynn High School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, similarly planned to play a football game where admission was 'by card only, and none other than close friends of the players [would] hold them'.[141] The game was 'regarded with horror' by the society people of Cambridge who considered it 'an astonishing move on the part of the aristocratic young women'.[142] The article stated that the team 'puts up an excellent game', thus, while some of the locals of Cambridge were horrified, the press was not. The *Milwaukee Journal* in 1897 reported on a similar, supposedly secret, game in St Joseph where 'a number of high school girls indulged in the pleasant, though masculine, game of football'.[143] The girls played on a vacant lot and did not advertise the game, to keep it relatively secret, but a 'large and appreciative audience' of guests attended and cheered every play. The presence of some 'wicked, wicked boys looking on who made ever so many wicked remarks' undermined the players' enjoyment of the game.[144] The

[139] 'Girls at Football', *Baltimore Sun*, 3 November 1894, 6.
[140] 'Girls Play Football', *Washington Post* (Washington DC), 8 April 1895, 7.
[141] 'Bloomers on the Gridiron', *Aberdeen Daily News* (Aberdeen, SD), 13 November 1895, n.p.
[142] Ibid.
[143] 'Girls Play Football', *Milwaukee Journal* (Milwaukee, WI), 27 November 1897, 8.
[144] Ibid.

journalist praised the girls' ability and noted that they could give their brothers some advice following the game. These young women, coming from good families and attending colleges and high schools, are evidence of young women from the higher classes taking part in football. Semi-private games meant that players could maintain their feminine propriety by playing in front of hand-picked audiences. These reports also praised what the young women were attempting to do. Their matches were not competitive events in front of large crowds, and this aspect is likely to have prompted the media's positive response.

While the girls in Washington DC believed that their families would like to see them play football, other parents remained concerned over their daughters' participation. For example, in 1906 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, a group of young women aged between 15 and 19 'practic[ed] almost religiously for more than two months' for a football game.[145] Their training took place in secluded parts of the city 'where only the privileged and the initiated witness[ed] the carnage'.[146] This comment suggests that the players permitted some people to view them. However, the reporter doubted that the women's parents knew what was happening, indicating that they might not accept their daughters playing football. While the use of the word 'carnage' suggests that the players were not particularly skilful, the author praised them for taking coaching well and being anxious 'to learn football as a science'.[147] The article incorporated a detailed account of the game, including a line-up, and replicated reporting conventions of male games. If the players intended to compete in secret, then a published line-up would have given them away, so some spectators likely reported the event. It is not clear in many of these cases how the stories made it into the newspapers. Reporters may have interviewed

[145] 'Football for Girls', *Daily Northwestern* (Evanston, IL), 3 November 1906, 4.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

players after the event, participants might have spoken to others about the game, or people inadvertently viewed the matches; it is not possible to know. The newspapers were not concerned about the girls playing football and did not feel the need to affirm their femininity in any way. The girls' scientific, as opposed to physical, approach to the game may have helped as this would reduce readers' concern that they might be injured.

In a further effort to ensure that female football players conformed to the era's demands of femininity, journalists occasionally highlighted players' attractiveness, examples of Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects. As Helen Lenskyj notes 'the femininity of women who play traditionally male sports is suspect unless they make deliberate efforts to meet male-defined standards of attractiveness'.[148] In 1897, for example, reports about some women playing in Belleville, Illinois, gained attention from the media in New York, Washington DC, and Kansas. Unlike other cases, these participants were not students from an educational establishment (where most women played games) but 'young society women'.[149] A local collegiate match had, according to the report, inspired the women to organise a game themselves. The mention of 'society women' provides more evidence that women from the higher classes played football in these years. The reporter referred to one player as a 'bright curly headed blonde with deep blue eyes', whilst another player reportedly responded 'saucily' to a question regarding the dress they would wear. The article's final sentence hints at the local boys' sexual interest in the players: they 'smile and wink an eye' when thinking about the prospect of the game.[150] Similarly, an article relating to a game in Ohio in 1899 stated that the 'young ladies' from the South Salem Academy would not find it

[148] Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport and Sexuality* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1986), 57.
[149] 'Belleville Girls to Play Football', *The Republic* (St Louis, MO), 26 November 1897, 9.
[150] Ibid.

difficult to secure games to play 'for the girls are among the prettiest in Ross county [sic]'.[151] This statement implies that teams would play them because of their looks, not because they accepted women's football. The reference to the players as 'young ladies' indicates that they too were from the middle or upper classes. Their attractiveness assured readers that they were still conforming to conventional notions of femininity despite their intentions, as did the fact that they remained 'ladies'.

Reports of the Belleville game mentioned above also demonstrate a different means through which players could establish the game's suitability. All four reports covering this event agreed that because it was women playing, it would not be as rough as the male game and organisers would 'not be compelled to call in the services of a surgeon'.[152] The *Atchison Daily Champion* highlighted the lack of roughness here and claimed that the women 'could play just as good, if not better' than the boys.[153] A *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reporter suggested that the women taking part in the game would have a kind of civilising influence and would play in a genteel manner.[154] Only one of the four articles mentioned any concern from the local citizens, reporting that 'the community has been stirred by the thought of the game with clergymen expressing horror … and several parents have put their feet down and said it should not be'.[155] The leading cause of the concern appeared to be that the girls were to play in public wearing bloomers, rather than the fact they were playing football, and ministers even visited players to dissuade them from taking part.[156] The fact that these were society

[151] 'Girl Football Players', *Topeka Daily State Journal* (Topeka, KS), 3 October 1899, 2.
[152] 'Belleville Girls to Play Football', 9.
[153] 'Girls to Play Football', *Atchison Daily Champion* (Atchison, KS), 8 December 1897, 1.
[154] 'Women as Foot Ball Players', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), 27 November 1897, 6.
[155] Ibid.
[156] 'A New Phase of Football', *Daily Times* (New Brunswick, NJ), 27 November 1897, 1.

women and roughness was not to be a part of the game evidently made the event acceptable to most locals and the media.

Many articles about female football matches did not include accompanying drawings, but heavily illustrated periodicals, such as the *National Police Gazette* (hereafter *Gazette*), often sexualised female football players to entertain and titillate their readers. The *Gazette*'s target audience is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the publication offered discounted subscription rates for locations where working-class men met, such as saloons and barbershops.[157] Richard Kyle Fox took over the *Gazette* in 1876, and by 1878 the first examples of his new editorial style emerged. Previously known for its truthfulness and credibility in its crime news reporting, the new *Gazette* focused on sensationalism to attract its working-class readership.[158] The women in the *Gazette* frequently appeared sexualised, corresponding to one of the paper's two main themes under Fox's ownership: sex and violence.[159] While the *Gazette* represented women playing sport, how they did so frequently exemplified key characteristics of Mulvey's male gaze theory. The sexualised representation of women in physical sports was typical for the *Gazette*, a magazine that was 'a robust assertion of white working-class male pride'.[160] Additionally, Fox did not care for football and found supporters who championed the sport hypocritical in justifying the scientific nature of football when prizefighting, which he believed was far more technical, remained banned. He thought that the fact that the middle and upper classes accepted football over boxing was

[157] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 224.
[158] Reel, *The National Police Gazette*, 11.
[159] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 272.
[160] Kathryn Oberdeck and Frank Higbie, 'Labour and Popular Print Culture', in *Volume 6. The Oxford History of Popular Culture: US Popular Print Culture 1860-1920*, ed. Christine Bold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 235.

because gentlemen's sons played it; as a result, the *Gazette*'s tone of coverage towards football was ironic and angry.[161]

The *Gazette*'s commercial need to meet the male readers' sexual tastes ensured that drawings eroticised female football players as fantasy figures rather than as models of genteel feminine behaviour. In 1894, for example, the *Gazette* included an article and accompanying full-page picture of girls who had been playing football in Denver, Colorado (Figure 1.4).[162] The *Milwaukee Sentinel* stated that the game had prize money of $50 and that the players received a salary; if true, this would be one of the earliest examples of female professional football players.[163] The author stated that the girls played in regulation uniform, had male coaches, and were 'wealthy and handsome girls' whom they called "The Denver" and the "All America".[164] Despite the regulation uniforms, the game was a modified version of football. Each team had a captain 'who has had experience in the Rugby and Association games', with the Denver's captain having played in the East, albeit in secret.[165] Despite the note on the regulation uniform, this was not evident in the *Gazette*'s accompanying drawing. The players appear fashionably attired and without the padding common to the male game, and one player in the background appears to be wearing a skirt with a hemline halfway between her knees and hips, which was not common for women outside of dance troupes and circus acts at the time. This representation emphasises the fact that the whole drawing was a male ideal of the game rather than a balanced sports report; the women conform to Mulvey's idea of the male gaze as passive objects of sexual desire

[161] Oriard, *Reading Football*, 219.
[162] 'Girls Who Play Football', *National Police Gazette*, 1 December 1894, 6.
[163] 'Of Interest to Women', *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Milwaukee, WI), 22 November 1894, 3.
[164] 'Girls Who Play Football', 6.
[165] Ibid.

where the gaze ‘imposes its desires onto the female’ body.[166] The drawing (which has deteriorated under digitisation and reproduction) suggests that the game was physical with a great deal of contact. The artist shows some players trampling on each other, while another has her arms grabbing at an opponent’s throat, exemplifying both of the *Gazette*’s key tropes of sex and violence. Despite this depiction, this drawing was likely speculative rather than based on eyewitness testimony since the young women played in secret.

[166] Amy Godoy-Pressland, ‘“No hint of bulging muscles”: The Surveillance of Sportswomen’s Bodies in British Print Media’, *Journalism* 17, no. 6 (2016): 746.


16 THE NATIONAL POLICE GAZETTE: NEW YORK.

GIRLS WHO PLAY FOOTBALL.

TWO TEAMS HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED AT DENVER, COL., WHO WEAR THE REGULATION UNIFORM, TRAIN WITH MASCULINE COACHERS AND ARE SAID TO PLAY WELL.

Figure 1.4: ‘Girls Who Play Football.’

The *Gazette* continued to sexualise female football players to ensure that they remained objects of desire for the assumed heterosexual male readers. A December 1894 *Washington Times* article mentioned that 22 female students at Alma College, Michigan, were ‘shivering in their shoes for fear their names will be known’ because they played a football game in the college dining room, during which they damaged

windows and the chandelier.[167] The editor positioned the article on the front page alongside stories of national importance including Mexico's preparations for war, political corruption, and a police scandal. This placement suggests that the editor considered the story important, perhaps unbelievable. The *Gazette* covered the same event but with its customary highly sexualised drawing (Figure 1.5) that showed the female players in long petticoats, but with tight, off-the-shoulder corset tops, which highlighted their conventional female forms. The artist also depicted them wearing high-heeled shoes, another indicator of femininity and traditional heterosexual male fantasy, despite the difficulty of playing football in this attire.[168] In all of these images, the artists invite the viewer to look upon the female players as objects of sexual desire: they are prime examples of the male gaze where the 'female star is turned into an ideal beauty'.[169] This drawing also exemplifies what Dunja Antunovic describes as the 'masculinist values [that] drive coverage that emphasizes sexual difference, constraining women to aesthetic sports and representations that accentuate the heterosexy ideal'.[170] While the women appeared to be playing the game physically, this drawing was another hypothetical imagining. Alma College was a private, liberal arts establishment that aimed 'to give a liberal education to all young ladies and gentleman, [sic] of good behavior who desire it', indicating that the students came from the middle or upper classes.[171] The media's need to emphasise the players' femininity in this manner is consistent with a requirement to ensure that women from these classes were not too physical. This kind of representation also conforms to the *Gazette*'s need to appeal to its working-class readership, but without scaring them into seeing the women

[167] 'Girls Played Football', *Washington Times* (Washington DC), 19 November 1894, 1.
[168] 'A Great Game of Football', *National Police Gazette*, 15 December 1894, 6.
[169] Godoy-Pressland, '"No hint of bulging muscles"', 749.
[170] Dunja Antunovic, '"You Had to Cover Nadia Comaneci": "Points of Change" in Coverage of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 13 (2016): 1552.
[171] Augustus Fredrich Bruske, *History of Alma College from 1886 to 1896* (Alma, MI: C.F. Brown, 1896), 12.

as a threat to men or as invaders in male spaces. Instead, the tone is one of novelty. This *Gazette* image is similar in composition to Figure 1.4, with one player on the ground in the bottom left, a group of players in the centre, and a player in the background towards the top right. This style was almost certainly because of it being an imagined representation of the contest, as *Gazette* artists would not have had access to the dining room. It also suggests that the *Gazette* had a standardised idea of the fantasy of female footballers; they wore feminine clothing and wrestled one another in their attempts to get the ball. These characteristics indicate that the artist coded the women's appearances 'for strong visual and erotic impact', providing evidence of Mulvey's male gaze.[172]

[172] Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.

Figure 1.5: ‘A Great Game of Football’.

A slightly less sexualised image of a game from Ohio also reveals similar compositional styles to other *Gazette* drawings. In 1899 the *Gazette* dedicated an entire page to the supposedly secret game that students in Ohio played that year (Figure 1.6).[173] The drawing hints at the game’s physicality as the players pile together in a fight for the ball.

[173] ‘Cleveland Girls Play Football’, *National Police Gazette*, 3 February 1900, 1.

The fact that the young women appear to be playing in a corridor rather than on a pitch was almost certainly because of the secrecy involved, and they practised anywhere they could find. The artist drew some of the women displaying their bare arms. This clothing may have been the attire they wore but was more likely an attempt to sexualise the participants. Women's sleeves in these years were known as leg-of-mutton sleeves which had puffed tops that diminished to a tight cuff at the wrist, or the elbow for eveningwear.[174] These women, therefore, are objects of the male gaze as the artist depicted them with more skin on display than was common; the image is a fantasy. Other women in the picture appear to have long sleeves, and thus the image is not quite as sexualised as the other *Gazette* drawings. The game seems to have taken place indoors, and the picture has a hint of a catfight, emphasising the titillation of seeing scantily-clad women fight one another. Figures 1.5 and 1.6 are similar in structure: one player is on the ground in the bottom left, a woman on the right is facing the left side of the image and leaning in to take part in the game, while more women stand behind both of them. These likenesses further suggest that the drawings were imaginary and demonstrate a similar compositional style. The players are representative of the *Gazette*'s approach towards football and demonstrate Fox's ironic tone, in this case, by publishing images of women playing the hyper-masculine sport.

[174] Lydia Edwards, *How To Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion From the 16th to the 20th Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 11.

CLEVELAND GIRLS PLAY FOOTBALL.
BASKETBALL WAS TOO TAME, SO THEY WENT IN FOR THE REAL ARTICLE.

Figure 1.6: 'Cleveland Girls Play Football.'

These images reveal that the *Gazette* represented female football players in a highly feminised and sexualised manner, which resonates with Bruce's rule of sexualisation where the media portrays women through 'patriarchal discourses of idealized sexual attractiveness'.[175] The fact that in many of these images the women appear to be wearing undergarments — clothes 'associated with sexual anatomy often perceived as

[175] Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74, no. 7-8 (2016): 366.

vessels of essential femininity' which offer the 'last barrier to full disclosure of the body' — continues to sexualise them and draw the male gaze.[176] Gorn notes that the *Gazette* existed 'to appeal to individuals' lusts, fears, hatreds, fantasies and desires', and this is apparent in these drawings of women's football.[177] Given the ironic tone that the *Gazette* took towards football in general, these images can also represent a challenge to male dominance in the sport. Robert Allen, in writing about burlesque in American culture, states that the drawings of female burlesque performers that the *Gazette* published were a threatening figure to masculinity because of 'the combination of expressive sexuality and freedom from bourgeois constraint'.[178] Reel notes that the *Gazette* employed 'great variety in the portrayals of women' and 'actually celebrated independent women'.[179] The artists portrayed female players as successfully able to play the sport, demonstrating that the game was not as masculine as its supporters emphasised and that women could take part, even if the artists sexualised them.

In contrast, a 1906 cartoon in *Puck* played on the contemporary concern about effeminacy amongst footballers by representing male players as weak, afraid of playing, and dominated by women (Figure 1.7).[180] The central player, holding the 1906 ball, has obvious similarities to Oscar Wilde and is undoubtedly a comment on these men's perceived sexuality as the 'relationship between effeminacy and same-sex passion is beyond dispute'.[181] As Eleanor Dobson notes, 'the photographic images of Wilde which proliferate are most often the portraits taken by Napolean Sarony, images

[176] Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 3.
[177] Elliott Gorn, 'The Wicked World: The *National Police Gazette* and Gilded-Age America', *Media Studies Journal* 6, no. 1 (1999): 12.
[178] Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 201.
[179] Reel, *The National Police Gazette*, 144.
[180] 'Football in 1906', *Puck*, 3 January, 1906, centrefold.
[181] Laurence Dumortier, 'Oscar Wilde's Multitudes: Against Limiting His Photographic Iconography', *English Literature in Transition* 58, no. 2 (2015): 152.

characterised by a kind of *effete* languor', an image that this portrayal reflects.[182] That the English legal system punished Wilde for his homosexuality also alludes to punishment for the effeminate football men. This depiction corresponds with middle- and upper-class white males' concerns over the effeteness of male collegians in the early twentieth century as described above. Their fear of feminisation of the male populace also included a fear of homosexuality, which this drawing reflects.[183] The picture also hints at players' sexuality and femininity through the inclusion of face powder and a perfume bottle at the bottom of the drawing, products commonly associated with women. The artist depicts the sole female in the picture as an old woman who nevertheless dominates the weak football players. Unlike the women represented in the *Gazette*, *Puck*'s artists did not sexualise her, but her dominance still poses a threat to football's masculinity.

[182] Eleanor Dobson, 'The Ghost of Oscar Wilde: Fictional Representations', in *Ghosts – or the (Nearly) Invisible: Spectral Phenomenon in Literature and the Media*, ed. Maria Flesichhack and Elmar Schenkel (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2016), 35. Emphasis in original.
[183] Michael S. Kimmel, 'Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity, 1880-1920', in *Sport, Men and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1990), 59.

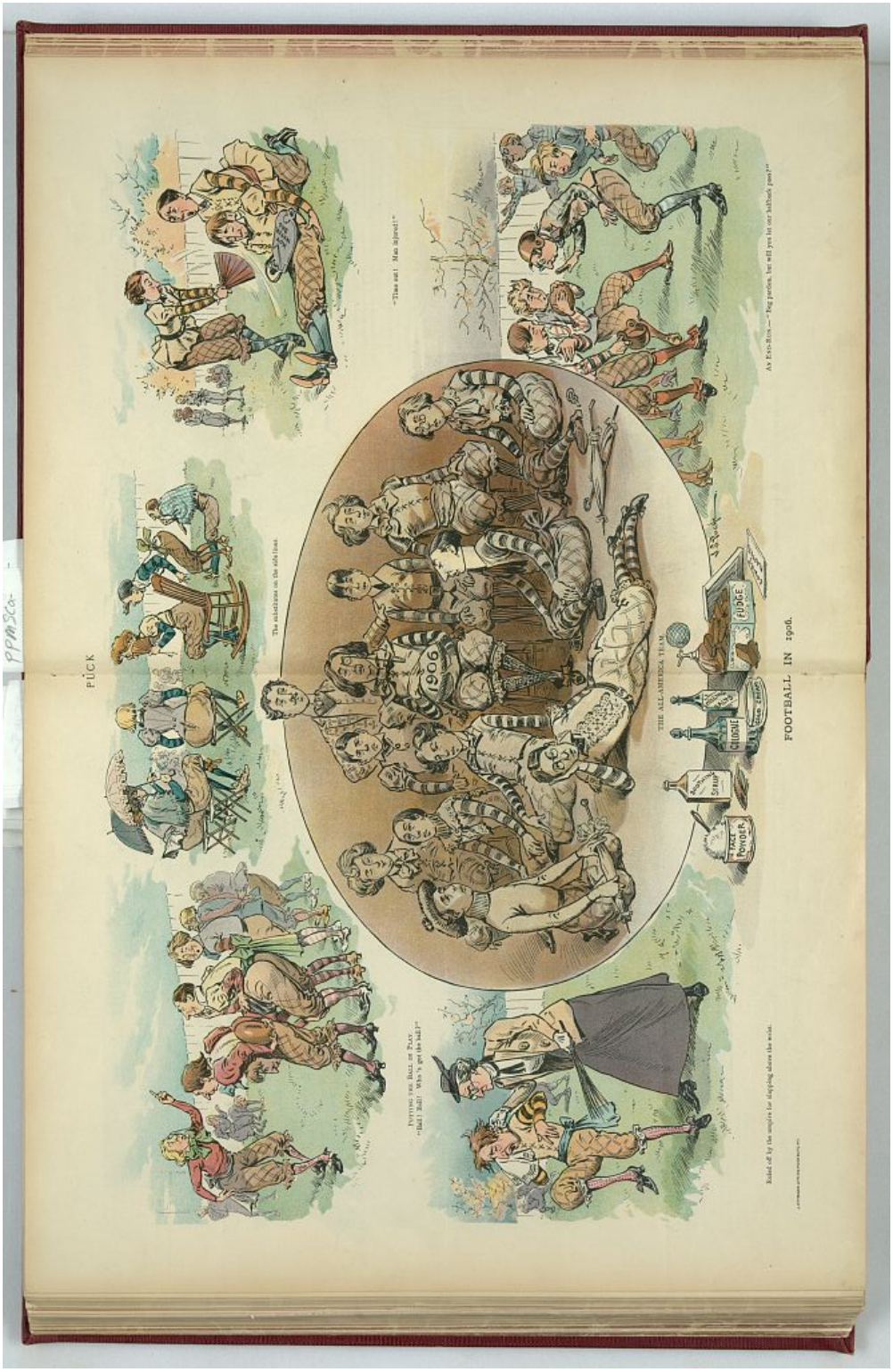

Figure 1.7: ‘Football in 1906.’

Social concern over the effeminacy of some men meant that women who played the sport in the same way as male players threatened the sport's masculinity; consequently, young women modified football to increase its suitability for them to play. Modifications to football also demonstrated the young women's adherence to the medical community's beliefs that highly physical sport for women was inappropriate. Newspaper articles' references to the different clothing worn by women football players compared to that worn by male players hint at modifications to the rules. By the 1880s, male football players wore padded uniforms that included trousers with protection at the hips and knees.[184] Players increasingly used helmets in the early 1900s to reduce injuries, yet reports of women's games rarely mentioned these items of clothing.[185] The match at the 'Misses Carter's School for Young Ladies in Catonsville', Maryland, in 1894 saw The Unquenchables and The Invisibles play a game with participants having a letter U or I on their sweater to indicate their team.[186] The match appears to have been an informal event with no lines marked out, and the players threw the ball against the fence to score a goal. The article contained no judgment of the event but mentioned 'some of the most delightful scrimmages imaginable', emphasising that the players were not particularly violent.[187] Students wearing sweaters and no padding indicate that this was not a particularly physical version of the sport and the players had probably modified the rules. Similarly, in 1902, the students at Union Female College, a seminary in Eufaula, Alabama, formed a football team from their senior class. The *Atlanta Constitution*'s initial article about this game referred to them as 'young ladies' and stated that their uniform would be short skirts and bloomers, which suggests they

[184] John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 138.
[185] Watterson, *College Football*, 60.
[186] 'Girls at Foot-Ball', *Baltimore Sun*, 13 November 1894, 6.
[187] Ibid.

have modified the sport to be able to play in these less protective outfits.[188] Media reports indicate that little outcry arose over the event, and the reporter's claim that the game would 'no doubt be witnessed and enjoyed by hundreds of spectators' appears to confirm a lack of press and local people's concern.[189] A further article from the *Atlanta Constitution* stated that the game was not public, being witnessed only by 'quite a number of spectators', though they did not state how many.[190] The article included a full line-up for the 'interesting and amusing' game and noted that the sophomore team won 15 to 5.[191] In this case, students not only modified the sport but also played behind semi-closed doors, helping the young women conform to broader notions of propriety despite the traditionally masculine game they were playing. These games also appear to be one-off events played for participants' fun; reports indicated no desire by the players to compete regularly, reducing the threat to the male game.

Modified versions of male sports were frequently popular with educationalists in the late nineteenth century, so football was not unique. Pedagogical attitudes aligned with the concerns of the medical establishment regarding contact sport for women. Most famously, Senda Berenson modified the rules of basketball to restrict women to specific sections of the court, reduced the time that players could possess the ball, and banned snatching it from opponents.[192] Berenson herself noted that these changes were necessary due to women's different physiology from men and that 'rough play can have no possible excuse in our young women' although it was essential for young

[188] 'Girls to Play Football', *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 February 1902, 5.
[189] Ibid.
[190] 'Girls Fight for Pigskin', *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 March 1902, 5.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Pamela Grundy, Murry Nelson, and Mark Dyreson, 'The Emergence of Basketball as an American National Pastime: From a Popular Participant Sport to a Spectacle of Nationhood', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 139.

men.[193] Clara Baer, a physical education instructor at Sophie Newcomb College, went further than Berenson by splitting the court into seven sections to limit running and specified that players must throw the ball with one hand for a graceful body position.[194] Similarly, with football, educators encouraged sports for women that retained similarities to the collegiate game but which their creators deemed 'acceptable'. One such example was Battle-Ball which Dr Sargent, the director of the Normal School of Physical Training at Harvard, invented in 1894. The game 'embrace[d] at once some of the features of bowling, and handball, tennis, cricket, baseball, and football', and Sargent considered the game acceptable for both boys and girls.[195] The *Democrat and Chronicle* described how a central line on the court separated opposing teams to limit contact; the sport's 'lack of roughness, its opportunity for quick, keen play — all of these make it a most desirable game'.[196] Female students at Northwestern University played a modified version of this called 'tussel ball'. The game retained similarities to football with 11 players on each side and included rushing and tackling; however, the ball was 'tossed about as in basketball' rather than carried by one player.[197] Similarly, students at Mount Holyoke College played 'speedball' which was a 'grand "three-in-one" combination' of soccer, basketball, and football.[198] Thus, while the skills required in masculine sports such as football could be useful for physical education, instructors needed to reduce the violence and high levels of physical contact. These modifications, which come from a range of places and dates, reveal how some educationalists allowed women at least partial access to football.

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[193] Senda Berenson, 'The Significance of Basket Ball for Women', in *Basket Ball for Women*, ed. Senda Berenson (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1903), 39.
[194] Pamela Dean, '"Dear Sisters" and "Hated Rivals": Athletics and Gender at Two New South Women's Colleges, 1893-1920', *Journal of Sport History* 24, no. 3 (1997): 350.
[195] Diana Crossways, 'Battle-Ball', *Detroit Free Press*, 24 February 1895, 10.
[196] 'Another Game for the Women', *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, NY), 3 May 1896, 4.
[197] 'Football in Bloomers', *Minneapolis Journal*, 15 October 1903, 8.
[198] 'Sportfolios', *Mount Holyoke News* (South Hadley, MA), 9 October 1936, 4.

Educators also accepted modifications to football that simulated dance or were part of gentle exercise classes. Miss Dunbar, a Delsarte coach, considered modified football games based on dance as acceptable for local girls in Pontiac, Michigan. The *Chicago Sunday Tribune* reported on a modified game where the girls played football through Delsartean exercises. The work of Genevieve Stebbins', the principal figure in American Delsartism, underpinned this exercise system that was based on gymnastics, breathing methods, and muscle relaxation. She also developed 'energising techniques' where 'one set of muscles would be contracted while maintaining relaxation in the rest of the body'.[199] The reports of this match mentioned that the students played only practice games to remain ladylike and not fall into the characteristics of the men's game.[200] This comment also alludes to the fact that these young women were playing for fun, not competition. While violence was one characteristic of the male game, another was high levels of competitiveness. These women adhered to social conventions by avoiding this element of the collegiate game. When a player tackled another, they would 'decompose' rather than struggle, using Delsartean techniques to reduce violent impact. To further mitigate excessive physical exertion, players used a catapult instead of a kick to get the ball over the bar, and there was no 'throttling, hacking, and gouging' to keep the game 'graceful and seemly'.[201] G. Stanley Hall, an educator and psychologist, believed that women's roles were as wives and mothers and that Swedish gymnastics was too 'severe' for girls; he considered dancing to be appropriate as 'no girl is educated who cannot dance'. Hall thought that dancing should be one of 'the most prominent of indoor exercises'.[202] Therefore, some physical

[199] Nancy Ruyter, 'American Delsartism: Precursor of an American Dance Art', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 13 (2009): 2021.
[200] 'Girls With Delsarte and Football', *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 13 October 1895, 1.
[201] Ibid.
[202] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 638.

educators would have viewed this game in Pontiac, with its links to dance, as an appropriate version of football for women. A similarly informal example of a female football game came from a YWCA gymnasium that, in 1898, used a match as part of a warm-up activity before a girls' exercise class.[203] The use of football as preparation for another sport suggests that this too was likely a modified version. Physical educators found a way to accept football through modifications and making connections to activities that they deemed suitable for women.

A final means of making football appropriate for women to play was to reduce tackling. The introduction of tackling below the waist in 1887 increased football's violence as well as the chances of injury.[204] Yet, it was not until the 1930s that tag/touch football became prominent when Spalding's *Official Interscholastic Football Guide* included it as an adaptation suitable for boys 'too young to take part in strenuous competition'.[205] Six-man football also developed in 1938 in an attempt to 'bring football to more boys in a safer and more enjoyable form' with less contact and shorter games.[206] However, women used a variety of methods to reduce tackling far earlier than the 1930s to ensure that their participation remained acceptable to educators and the wider public. For example, in 1892, female students at the School of Design in Philadelphia tagged each other instead of making tackles. One of the players stated that a reason for the modified tackling was that the ground was dirty, rather than to make the sport less physical.[207] This statement emphasises the players' concern over their appearances and demonstrates Bruce's rule of ambivalence in which reporters juxtapose the

[203] 'An Evening in the New "Gym"', *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, NY), 16 January 1898, 14.
[204] Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 136.
[205] Spalding's Athletic Library, *Official Interscholastic Football Guide* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1931), n.p.
[206] Stephen Epler, *Six-Man Football: The Streamlined Game* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), x.
[207] 'Girls at Football', *Daily Times* (New Brunswick, NJ), 14 November 1892, 2.

players' physicality in playing football with references to traditional feminine attributes. The modification to reduce tackling is also evident in other articles. For example, students at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota in 1923 decided on 'three blows on the back' as an alternative to tackling in their 6-6 tie. Apart from a reduction to eight-minute halves and the addition of a 15-yard penalty for hair pulling, the game conformed to regular rules.[208] In removing tackling, these young women removed one of the most violent aspects of the sport, thereby ensuring their games' appropriateness.

Some women desired to play football between 1890 and 1906 but were acutely aware of the need to conform to appropriate behaviour. This awareness ensured that they played respectably, through playing in secret and in modifying the rules. These characteristics explain the relatively sensation-free nature of newspaper articles about these games. Some women from all classes wanted and were able, to play football, provided they conformed to feminine sensibilities. In most cases, they needed to organise their own games to satisfy their interest in playing the sport. These games were outside of organised leagues or cups, and participants played them solely for fun. Where games took place in educational establishments, they were not against other schools or as a competitive intramural sport.

Conclusion

The front cover of *Puck* (Figure 1.8) from November 1898 summarises the barriers facing women who wanted to play football in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[209] The drawing alludes to social attitudes as humour magazines satirised the era's concerns over declining masculinity and football's violence. *Puck*'s front cover articulates these concerns and explores women's appropriate role in the sport.

[208] 'College Girls Battle to Tie on Gridiron', *Baltimore Sun*, 2 December 1923, 51.
[209] 'The Modern Maid – As Changeable as the Seasons', *Puck*, 23 November 1898, front page.

Women's purpose was to be admirers of the male players to emphasise their masculinity; female spectators thus needed to adhere to conventions of femininity. In this drawing, the fashionably attired woman has rejected three other men, including a sailor and one of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, the very epitome of manliness in the late 1890s, for the scruffy and injured football player. The title 'The Modern Maid – As Changeable as the Seasons' alludes to how women were changing the types of men with whom they sought a relationship, emphasising that football players had become a source of romantic interest. Academic literature presents a narrow view of women's role in the sport, limiting it to that of a spectator, a role that 'heightened the martial heroic element of the sport'.[210] Yet, numerous newspaper reports examined above contradict these claims. Despite these anxieties, and helped by the emergence of the New Woman, some women found ways to play the game but social norms and a requirement that they display appropriate behaviour and femininity constrained them.

[210] Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 130.

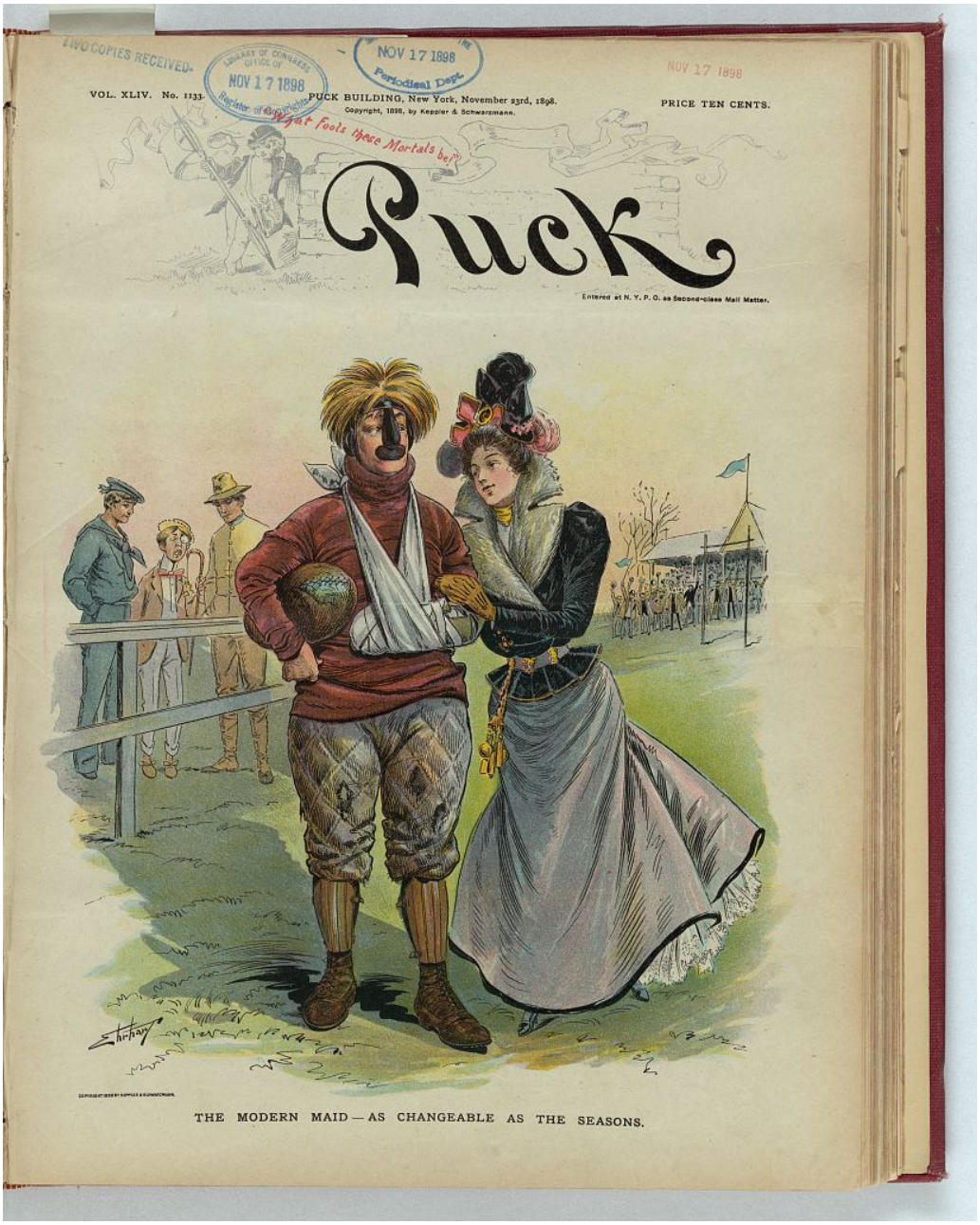

Figure 1.8: ‘The Modern Maid – As Changeable as the Seasons.’

While working-class women were frequently more able than those from the higher classes to take part in physical sports at the end of the nineteenth century, most of the women and girls playing the games analysed thus far appear to have come from the middle and upper classes. These examples of female football players challenge the

broader literature that focuses on the genteel sports that women from the upper and middle class played. For instance, Jean Williams notes that 'participation in vigorous games was considered by some to be incompatible with true womanliness' and that 'the association of certain pursuits with class identity' existed.[211] Similarly, Patricia Vertinsky contends that medical experts agreed that 'women of the better classes could swim, dance and ride, with relative ease' but running was not appropriate.[212] Yet these examples have shown that women not only ran but also played the highly physical sport of football, challenging contemporary medical attitudes.

It is not always possible to definitively state participants' class. However, references to 'aristocratic' young women in Cambridge, a school for 'Young Ladies', or students from Alma College, a private college in Michigan, demonstrate that young women from the middle and upper classes were playing football. Class, in these cases, appeared not to be a barrier to participation in the sport. By attempting to play in secret, even if someone compromised this secrecy to the extent that local newspapers knew about the games, the young women went some way to adhering to conventional femininity. This need to play in private reflects class issues in baseball where working-class women were able to play in public. However, women from the upper class had to play in private 'where proper dress and decorum were maintained' in order to conform to dominant ideas of respectability.[213] The secretive nature of many games also indicates that the participants organised these events for their own amusement.

While Bruce's rule of appropriate femininity is evident in some of these examples, in many of the newspaper reports it was the young women who emphasised their

[211] Williams, *A Beautiful Game*, 49.
[212] Patricia Vertinsky, 'The Social Construction of the Gendered Body: Exercise and the Exercise of Power', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, no. 2 (1994): 162.
[213] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 23, 25.

propriety rather than the journalists. The young women chose to ensure that they acted correctly by playing in secret or modifying the sport. Newspaper coverage of these female players demonstrates an element of acceptability and even praise for their ability. This response relied on the fact that the women adhered to social norms and journalists occasionally resorted to stereotypes if the women did not. A highly sexualised design, which resonates with Mulvey's male gaze, was evident in the *National Police Gazette*'s portrayal of women, but this overt treatment was rare. However, it is possible to read these representations in different ways. For example, Reel notes that it is possible to view depictions of women taking part in traditionally male sports as a 'sort of sacrifice of "manhood" to dominating women in these portrayals'.[214] The artists linked these women with burlesque, something Alan Trachtenberg comments as taking 'wicked fun in reversing roles, shattering polite expectations, brazenly challenging notions of the approved ways women might display their bodies'.[215] In this way, the *Gazette* was not just sexualising the players but challenging what women could do, presenting highly feminine women as threats to football's masculinity.

While football authorities' use of the sport as a site for demonstrating masculinity, coupled with social attitudes that dictated how women should behave, constrained female football players, women found that they could play the sport if they modified it and played against their own gender. Young women who attempted to play against male teams, or alongside male teammates, also found a positive media response to

[214] Reel, *The National Police Gazette*, 171.
[215] Alan Trachtenberg, 'Foreword', in *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*, Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), xii.

their attempts to play the sport, even though their participation could significantly damage football's masculine reputation and gender order.

Chapter 2: Playing Alongside and Against Men and Boys

In December 2011, National Football League (NFL) Commissioner Roger Goodell stated that '[t]he military is about to allow women into combat. If women are going to be fighting on the battlefield, how can we stop them from participating in football?'[1] The NFL was attempting to demonstrate its 'more "feminine" and "progressive" sides', and it marked the first time that the League formally acknowledged women's ability to participate in the world's most recognisable football competition.[2] However, Goodell's statement does not mean that 2011 marked the beginning of women's opportunities to participate in football either alongside male teammates or on female sides that played against men. Women have played football against male teams since at least 1898 and alongside male teammates in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

Beginning with the examples of the young women who played football against male teams in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these case studies reveal a different, more formal, means of female participation in the sport than those of young women playing against their own gender for fun in Chapter 1. These examples show women directly encroaching into the male domain of football by playing alongside or against male teammates on organised teams. Following the young women who formed teams to play against male sides, the girls who played on male squads in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s are the focus. The analysis of these case studies answers two questions: firstly, how did the media respond to these young women, and secondly, what restrictions did authority figures put on their participation?

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[1] Ian Shoesmith, 'Breaking the NFL's Gender Barrier', 1 March 2013, https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/american-football/21606400 (accessed 4 June 2018).
[2] J.B. Smitts, 'NFL to Allow Women to Play', 29 December 2011, http://weeklyworldnews.com/headlines/28709/nfl-to-allow-women-to-play/ (accessed 5 December 2018).

Changing social conditions that allowed women access to male-dominated areas of life assisted the women who played football alongside and against men and boys between 1898 and 1957. The examples of women playing against male teams at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries came at the same time as the feminist movement and middle-class women's demands for employment in professional jobs.[3] With employers barring women from 'all but the most menial and degrading of employments,' some women realised that voting rights would provide them with the ability to fight for better conditions and opportunities.[4] More women gained employment between 1865 and 1920, including in white-collar occupations, but they were 'subject to gendered limitations'.[5] For example, while the American Federation of Labor supported equal pay for women, their encouragement of this policy was to make women 'less attractive employees to cost-conscious employers.'[6] Many states barred women from public employment in jobs such as teaching.[7] Thus, while women made progress in accessing employment, they still faced significant restrictions.

The examples of girls playing on otherwise all-male football teams begin in 1934 and end in 1957 came at the same time as increasing political and employment opportunities for women, albeit with constraints. The increase in women's opportunity for political influence in the 1930s was evident in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's appointment of women to key government posts, including Frances Perkins, who in

[3] Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1840-1920* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1977), 24.
[4] Evans, *The Feminists*, 24.
[5] S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States: 1830-1945* (Basingstoke, MacMillan Press, 1999), 105
[6] Ibid., 121.
[7] Ibid., 127.

1933 became the first woman cabinet member as Secretary of Labor.[8] Under Roosevelt, 'a higher percentage of women received government appointments than ever before'.[9] However, the Depression limited most women's employment prospects, and the Works Progress Administration restricted the roles available for each sex.[10] Similarly, during World War II, women entered the workforce in some typically male jobs. Despite this progress, some employers restricted their roles to those deemed suitable for them, with many jobs labelled as male and female.[11] Much like during the Depression, women's positions in the workplace were only acceptable if they did not come at the expense of male jobs. At the end of the war, the expectation from employers was that women would leave their roles to make way for the returning men.[12]

Between 1898 and 1957, some women took part in sporting and recreational activities that physicians and public commentators had traditionally considered male. In the late nineteenth century, some women 'began earning fame and money through sporting endeavours', including strong women, long-distance cyclists, and pedestrians.[13] As Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister note, these performances 'seemingly transcended the possibilities of most men.'[14] In the 1920s and 1930s, Ruth Nichols and Amelia Earhart challenged male dominance in piloting aircraft.[15] Nevertheless, these decades

[8] Sarah Jane Deutsch, 'From Ballots to Breadlines:1920-1940', in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 458.
[9] Deutsch, 'From Ballots to Breadlines', 458.
[10] Kleinberg, *Women in the United States*, 223.
[11] Ruth Milkman, 'Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II', in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 468.
[12] Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 229.
[13] Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister, 'Women Boxers: Actresses to Athletes – The Role of Vaudeville in Early Women's Boxing in the USA', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1912.
[14] Ibid., 1912.
[15] Kleinberg, *Women in the United States*, 273.

'were also a period of anti-feminist backlash in response to women's newly won franchise,' restricting many women's sporting opportunities.[16] Women also made progress in accessing sports roles traditionally occupied by men. For example, during World War II, women 'worked as jockeys, umpires, bowling pin setters, caddies, [and] horse trainers'.[17] Some women, including Pauline Foster, Madeline Bell, Pauline Rugh, and Mary McMichael, coached high school football teams, although many had to relinquish their roles after the war.[18] Not only did women take on male roles in sport between 1898 and 1957, but occasionally they competed against them.

Away from football, instances of women competing alongside or against men in team sports were rare in the late nineteenth century, even though some women competed against men in individual sports such as boxing. Susan Cahn notes that 'sport functioned as a male preserve, an all-male domain in which men not only played together but also demonstrated and affirmed their manhood'.[19] Andrea Radke-Moss echoes this and states that when women did take part in team sports, it was in a 'culture of separation'.[20] Few examples exist of middle- and upper-class women competing against male teams in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, making these football case studies particularly unusual.

Examples of women playing on predominantly male teams in sports other than football are also rare, especially in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Marilyn Cohen provides the

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[16] Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 41.
[17] Merrie Fidler, *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 33.
[18] Katie Taylor, '"The First Female Football Coach…": A History of Female American Football Coaches, 1880-1960', Sport and Leisure History Seminar Paper, 15th March 2021.
[19] Susan Cahn, '"Mannishness", Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sports', in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron de Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 509.
[20] Andrea Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 191.

example of Jackie Mitchell, who, in 1931, 'posed the first real challenge to professional baseball as a male preserve' when she signed a contract with the Chattanooga Lookouts.[21] Cohen states that Mitchell was 'essentially a feminine object who was merely a sexualized publicity stunt' despite having struck out Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth in an exhibition game.[22] Barbara Stewart describes the case of ice hockey player Abby Hoffman who played the sport competitively on a male youth team in the 1950s.[23] In both cases, the young women's participation was short-lived as officials voided Mitchell's contract and league members convinced Hoffman to join a girls' team after they realised that she was a girl. Kenesaw Mountain Landis, the Commissioner of the league in which Mitchell played, claimed that baseball was too strenuous for women. Stewart offers no reasons for the league's decision to ban Hoffman, but the post-war period's 'fervent, almost frenetic return to traditional gender roles' was a probable cause.[24] These societal changes also affected youth sport where playground and Little League teams that were open only to boys crowded out sandlot teams which girls had been able to join informally.[25]

Girls' and women's interest in competing alongside, or against male teams, could result in questions about their sexuality. For example, during World War II, a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps training course contained a lecture on 'Sexual Maladjustments' which provided details on how to identify 'mannish' women. Characteristics that the course associated with such women were that 'she abhors girls' interests and persistently

[21] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 38.
[22] Ibid., 39.
[23] Barbara Stewart, 'In From the Cold', in *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*, ed. Lissa Smith (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 280.
[24] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate Is Not Equal in Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188.
[25] Jean O'Reilly and Susan Cahn, *Women and Sports in the United States* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2007), 12.

prefers playing with … and competing with boys'.[26] Yet newspaper reports about most of the young women profiled below reveal little emphasis on their heteronormativity.

The women who played against male teams, or alongside male teammates, directly challenged football's masculine space. Michael Oriard describes the women who played on men's teams in the 1930s and 1940s as 'potentially more disruptive' to football's gender order than those who played in highly feminised powderpuff games for amusement and charity.[27] However, the women who played against male teams were far more likely to disrupt the gender order than one woman on an all-male side. An all-female team beating an all-male squad is a direct challenge to football authorities' assumed superiority of male football players. However, despite the potential of these young women to disrupt football's gender order, newspapers did not appear particularly concerned with either the women playing alongside male teammates in the 1930s and 1940s or those who played against male teams between 1898 and 1912. These newspapers praised the young women, frequently highlighting their skill and physicality, and, in most cases, did not emphasise the players' appearances. However, some male authority figures, including coaches and local clergymen, were alarmed over these mixed-gender games. Some coaches included female players as a novelty, using them as a stark contrast against the masculinity of male players to safeguard football's gender order. Bans on female players by coaches and football authorities demonstrated this need to protect the sport. It was when coaches used young women as a form of novelty, rather than as serious athletes, that the media emphasised the women's attractiveness and femininity. Where coaches accepted the young women as

[26] Nancy Bouchier and Marla Steiner, 'The Politics of the Physical: American Female Physical Educators and the US Army Air Forces at War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, no.1 (1994): 5.
[27] Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 356.

serious players, the press mostly did the same. These extraordinary examples demonstrate that women were able to challenge the sport's prevailing gender order that football was created by, and played only by, men.

'No Athletic Fields Left to Conquer': Girls versus Boys

The majority of the games that young women played against male teams in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were informal, but when games became increasingly competitive, local authority figures became concerned. Debra Shattuck, in her history of female baseball players, noted that men who played against women's sports teams sometimes developed a notion of 'male gallantry' to explain that if they lost, it was because they were treating the opposition like ladies.[28] In doing this, the young men could retain their dominance in sport because the women had not won due to their superiority over male players. Yet an analysis of these footballing examples from the period suggests that 'male gallantry' was not a widespread issue when women's football teams played against men, suggesting that these women won because they were the better players. These female players thereby represented a potential threat to football's hyper-masculinity.

Class influenced the media response when women occasionally competed against men in a variety of sports from the mid- to late nineteenth century. In the 1860s, some baseball promoters realised that they could charge spectators who wanted to see attractive women play against teams of men. Newspaper coverage of these events focused on the women's bodies and outfits, rather than on their ability. For example, an 1890 article on a male versus female baseball game commented on the women's skills,

[28] Debra Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 143.

but paid more attention to the female players' clothing and figures.[29] These references provide an example of Toni Bruce's rule of ambivalence by juxtaposing the players' ability with their conventional physical attractiveness. As Oriard notes, 'almost all sports journalism was implicitly addressed to male readers'; thus editors expected that men would be more interested in the female players' looks than their skills on the field.[30] These baseball players were often working-class women who had already broken the conventions of femininity by working outside of their home. Yet, the public still criticised them for their lack of respectability.[31] Baseball was not the only sport where women competed against men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, in the smaller Wild West shows in the Western states, women competed for small prizes against male cowboys.[32] Female boxers, especially in variety theatres, competed in sparring competitions against men. For example, Cecil Richards managed to participate not just in sparring competitions but also in exhibition rounds against male boxers, even though most top male fighters frequently refused offers to compete against women.[33] Theatres also provided the setting for female wrestlers to compete against men. For example, in 1880, 300 people witnessed a match between Ida Alb and Charles A. Standbrook in St. Louis, Missouri.[34] These women were predominantly from working-class backgrounds, and their involvement was mainly for entertainment purposes, as evidenced by the locations for both boxing and wrestling bouts. Newspaper reports of the women who competed in these sports denounced them as

[29] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 23.
[30] Oriard, *King Football*, 351.
[31] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 23.
[32] Mary Lou LeCompte, 'Cowgirls at the Crossroads: Women in Professional Rodeo, 1885-1922', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 20, no. 2 (1989): 27.
[33] Gems and Pfister, 'Women Boxers', 1917-9.
[34] L.A. Jennings, *She's a Knockout: A History of Women in Fighting Sports* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 32.

'curiosities and sexual misfits'.[35] This type of coverage further demonstrates the societal attitude that women who took part in masculine sports did not conform to heteronormative standards. Class played an important role in the newspapers' response and, in contrast to these negative reports about working-class women, the press response to the middle- and upper-class girls playing football was positive despite their encroachment into football's male space.

In 1906, the humorous magazine *Life* articulated its concern over a changing gender order in football when it published the drawing 'The Only Solution' (Figure 2.1), an image that also referenced recent rule changes in the sport.[36] These amendments to the sport's rules originated from media and football authorities' unease about its violence. This concern came to a head with the death, from a cerebral haemorrhage, of Harold Moore of Union College in 1905.[37] University of Chicago Professor of Divinity Shailer Matthews referred to the sport as 'a social obsession — a boy-killing, education prostituting, gladiatorial sport', demonstrating the alarm surrounding football at the time.[38] In April 1906, at the Murray Hill Hotel, representatives from 62 colleges decided upon new rules to reduce the sport's violence, leading to the creation of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, the forerunner of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.[39] Amongst the rule changes was the introduction of the forward pass, specifically designed to remove some of the advantages of weight.[40] This change

[35] Amber Roessner, 'The New Woman as Athlete: Coverage of the Sporting Woman in the Gilded Age Press', in *After the War: The Press in a Changing America, 1865-1900*, ed. David Sachsman (New York: Routledge, 2017), n.p.
[36] Otto Cushing, 'The Only Solution', *Life*, 8 November 1906, front page.
[37] John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 72-74.
[38] 'Favor Revision of Rules', *New York Times*, 27 November 1905, 5.
[39] Scott McQuilkin, 'Brutality in Football and the Creation of the NCAA: A Codified Moral Compass in Progressive America', *Sport History Review* 33, no. 1 (2002): 10-11.
[40] Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 376.

theoretically assisted women in playing the sport as it removed some of the sport's physical contact. The subtitle of a 1906 *New York Tribune* report of a match between girls' and boys' football teams of New Hartford High School recognised this possibility, 'New Rules Help Them to Defeat Boys in Fast Practice Game'.[41] These changes underpinned *Life*'s cartoon. The caption 'If you want us to play like gentlemen, make it a ladies' game' suggested that rule-makers had removed too much violence and physicality from the sport. The image goes further than just expressing male outrage at the rule changes. The inclusion of women in the foreground, one of whom is holding a football, indicates the possibility that women could now play the sport, and the fact that they outnumber the men suggests a possible takeover. The women are dressed in short skirts with fashionable hair, tiny waists, and accentuated busts, making the sport appear sanitised and feminine. The presence of this image on *Life*'s front page indicates that this was a highly topical and significant story and would appeal to the magazine's readers' interest in social satire. *Life*'s drawing reminded readers that football was supposed to be a masculine sport, but that recent rule changes had made it more feminine. The women in this drawing are disrupting the sport's gender order, and yet media coverage of real (rather than imagined) matches do not appear to have shared this concern.

[41] 'Girl Football Players Win', *New York Tribune*, 27 October 1906, 1.

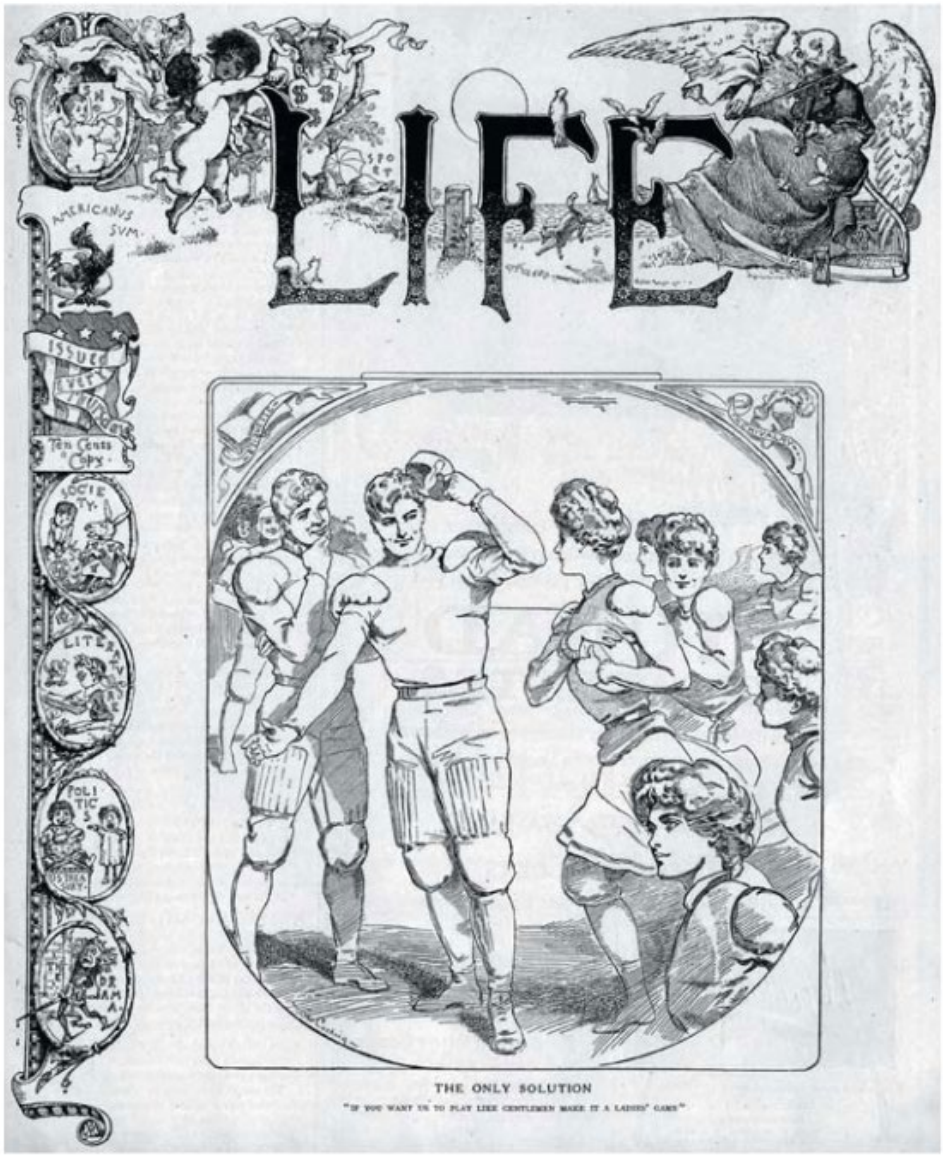

Figure 2.1: ‘The Only Solution’.

Reports from games that girls played against teams of boys suggest that newspapers did not see these young women as disrupting the sport’s gender order, despite their victories. Articles about two games where teams of 14- to 16-year-old girls beat male sides demonstrate that some authority figures, as well as friends and families, could accept young women playing against men. For example, the Rough Riders Rugby girls’ football team of St. Louis beat the male Washington Avenues team 10-0 in 1898. The

11 players were girls from the local high school in West End, an area of St Louis that was, according to the *Bureau County Tribune*, 'the finest residence portion' of the city, along with two others from 'private institutions'.[42] They played the game on private grounds on Washington Avenue, not over concerns for propriety but because, according to the report, it was their first game and they were worried about the result.[43] The young women played in secret because they did not want people to see them lose, not because they were trying to adhere to the era's expectations of appropriate female behaviour seen in the examples in Chapter 1. The team invited some guests to the match, including parents, who the reporter stated were 'indulgent and admiring' and 'proud of their daughters', believing the sport to be 'good wholesome exercise, and innocent amusement'.[44] The game's informal nature seemingly posed no threat to the masculine sport since everyone involved believed that the participants were playing only for fun. Similarly, in 1905, girls from Mrs M. E. Meade's Hillside Select Seminary played a game against the second eleven of the Military Academy of Norwalk. The girls won 12-0, and most reports praised them for their 'inborn knowledge'. They played the game 'in accordance with football rules accepted by all colleges', implying that they had not modified the sport.[45] A local clergyman, the Superintendent of Public Schools, and a professor from the military academy acted as officials, suggesting that local authority figures supported this game. According to the report, the clergyman championed the girls, saying that 'there was nothing silly or weakly feminine about it …. It was good, healthy play, and showed what girls can do'. He did emphasise that the girls played only in front of their families, making it more acceptable than a public match, indicating that some authority figures remained concerned about the morality of women

[42] 'Fifty Dollars For His Fee', *Bureau County Tribune* (Princeton, IL), 19 August 1898, 1; 'Girls Rugby Eleven Beats the Boys' Team', *Republic-St. Louis* (St Louis, MO), 6 November 1898, 10.
[43] 'Girls Rugby Eleven Beats the Boys' Team', 10.
[44] Ibid.
[45] 'Girls Appear on the Gridiron', *San Francisco Call*, 23 November 1905, 10.

competing in public.[46] However, the fact that the girls were playing football appears to have caused little alarm, and the newspapers praised the players for their ability.

Evidence that newspapers were unconcerned about these young women playing football is obvious in their praise for the players. Had reporters viewed these women as a threat to the male game, they would have downplayed their ability. For example, the *Republic-St. Louis* reporter demonstrated their praise when they wrote: 'It was a pretty sight to observe the plays of the girls, their plots and the clever manner of their executions. The tackling was excellent, the blocking fair, but their sprinting and dodging were the feature of the game.'[47] The players hoped that their example would lead to the formation of other, similar teams.[48] The game in Connecticut attracted attention in newspaper reports from as far as California, Minnesota, and Georgia. The *Atlanta Journal* praised the way the girls played as they 'tore through the boys' line', and highlighted Mary Rider for playing a remarkable game, excelling in kicking goals and punting.[49] The academy punished the boys for losing to the girls, removing their symbolic colours and letters for a month. Despite the school's sense of shame, the press was positive about the match, demonstrating that they were unconcerned that young women were beating male players.

These newspapers' response to these young women is consistent with the way that the media treated baseball players of the same class. In cases where newspapers perceived female baseball players to be playing for fun, they tended to praise the women.[50] In contrast, newspapers subjected working-class women to adverse reports

[46] 'Football Girls Will Play Again', *Minneapolis Journal*, 24 November 1905, 10.
[47] 'Girls Rugby Eleven Beats the Boys' Team', 10.
[48] 'Rough Riders Rugby', *Marion Record* (Marion, KS), 18 November 1898, 2.
[49] 'Girls Eleven Trimmed Team of Boy Students', *Atlanta Journal*, 3 December 1905, 4.
[50] Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, 59.

when they competed against men. The *Republic-St. Louis* report mentioned that the St. Louis girls were from 'the principal families of the West End' and thus respectable. The additional comment that the parents were 'constructing a new field in Forest Park, where crowds can gather at the games' indicates that the players were from families with disposable wealth to spend on leisure.[51] Similarly, the *Minneapolis Journal* reported that another game would take place the following Monday for the girls in Connecticut and the article emphasised that the players were the 'daughters of Norwalk's prominent families'.[52] These young women posed less of a threat to football than working-class women who may have played for money; consequently, newspaper coverage was positive.

Where editors chose to place reports of these games also demonstrates a positive media response, as well as a belief that they were similar to male matches. This positioning helps to reject the premise that newspapers viewed these events as a challenge to male hegemony. For example, the *Republic-St. Louis*'s article took up the three middle columns of a seven-column page that was primarily sports news. Similarly, the reports of the Connecticut game in the *San Francisco Call* and *Atlanta Journal* appeared in these newspapers' dedicated sports sections, demonstrating that the editors considered the contest to be sport, not entertainment. However, the *Minneapolis Journal*'s editor placed the article on a page dominated by adverts for male clothing, and it was just one of two short pieces in the bottom left-hand corner. The editor's decision to place the article on a page dominated by advertisements suggests that they did not consider it an important story. The mostly positive newspaper reports, none of which emphasised the young women's appearances or

[51] 'Girls Rugby Eleven Beats the Boys' Team', 10.
[52] 'Football Girls Will Play Again', 10.

belittled their efforts, do not indicate journalistic concern that these young women were any kind of threat to the sport.

The illustration accompanying one of the articles suggests that the media was not afraid of these women. Denver's *Weekly News* included a drawing of the St. Louis game (Figure 2.2) on their women's page.[53] It showed a female player getting away from her male opponents like Gibson's 'The Coming Game', with the young woman in the foreground and men chasing her from behind. The construction of the *Weekly News*' image puts the woman in a position of dominance and hints at women's growing influence in society at the time. The artist depicted the captain with fashionable headwear and wearing traditional feminine attire rather than her football clothing, helping to reinforce the fact that these young women adhered to the era's conventions of femininity despite their choice of sport. The image provides little evidence of Laura Mulvey's belief, as part of male gaze theory, that in visual representations, the male hero 'acts' and women are 'passive images of visual perfection'.[54] In this example, the woman is neither demonstrably perfectly feminine, nor is she passive. The opposite appears to be the case as the young woman dominates the image with the male players trying to catch up with her. The editor's inclusion of this image on a woman's page explains why the artist depicted the female player so positively. She is a role model for the female readers. However, the placement in the bottom left-hand corner of the page (Figure 2.3) was not particularly prominent.[55] The editor included two other, much larger, images on the page: one of two women wearing evening dresses, also at the bottom, and a large drawing of two women socialising in Paris that covered almost

[53] 'St. Louis Football Girls', *The Weekly News* (Denver, CO), 17 November 1898, 6.
[54] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 9; Janice Hocker Rushing, 'Putting Away Childish Things: Looking at Diana's Funeral and Media Criticism, *Women's Studies in Communication* 21, no. 2 (1998): 153.
[55] 'St. Louis Football Girls', 6.

the entire top half of the page. While the articles still praised the young women, the page's most prominent pictures showed women conforming to social norms and gender- and class-appropriate roles that the middle- and upper-class readers of a woman's society page expected.

Figure 2.2: 'St. Louis Girls Play Foot Ball and Win From Boys.'

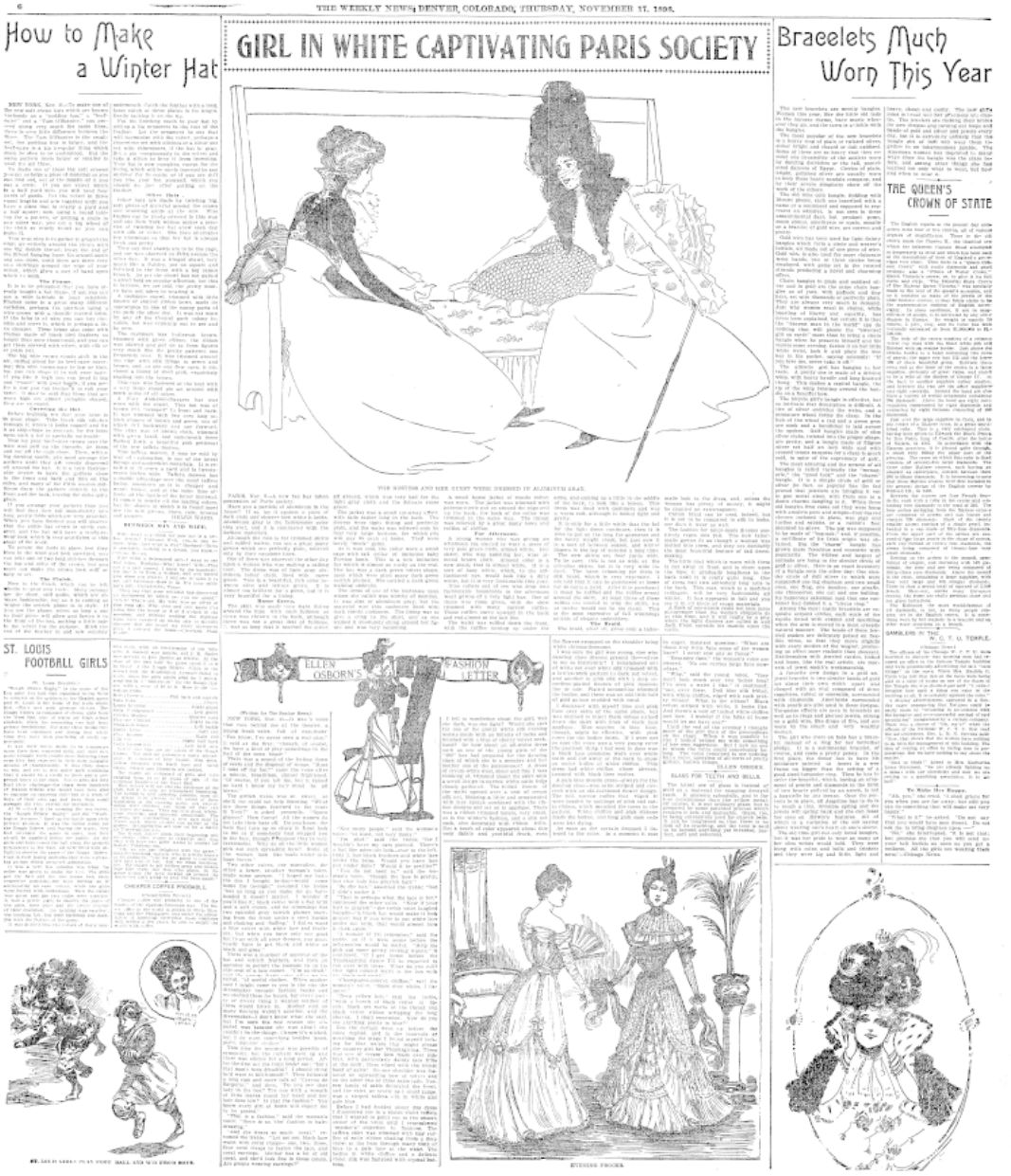

Figure 2.3: Women's page from *The Weekly News*, 1898.

While most reporters were unconcerned about women playing against male teams, some felt a need to ensure that women playing football did not pose a threat to the masculine sport. They did this by casting doubt on the players' ability and suggesting that other sports may be more appropriate than football. A short paragraph in the *Marble Hill Press* queried whether the Connecticut game was real football as it claimed

that girls could not kick as well as boys and that a tackle would be no more than 'an exaggerated hug'.[56] This description reduced the female players' physicality to womanly acts of warmth and kindness, demonstrating Bruce's rule of appropriate femininity where the media emphasises stereotypical attributes associated with women. The *Marble Hill Press* was one of Bollinger County's most respected newspapers and a comment like this could be indicative of local reaction to this incident, but such negativity is an anomaly.[57] The same match also featured in an *Evening World's Home Magazine* article that offered a prize for someone who could come up with a new game for women that would 'contain the very incentives to strenuousness which are objected to in the old'.[58] The reporter was concerned about women participating in physical sports and referred to an unnamed girl — presumably Bernadette Decker — who died playing football as a further reason for not allowing them to play.[59] The author also asked: 'Can it be that there are no athletic fields left for the sex to conquer?' New York's *Evening World* exemplified the yellow journalism of the 1890s by relying on attention-grabbing and possibly misleading headlines, which may explain their sensationalist response.[60] The article indicates that some commentators worried that women playing football could disrupt the sport's gender order. A similar article in the *Indianapolis News* discussed society women from New York who had formed a girls' athletic league. The reporter acknowledged that the women wanted an activity that taught the same values that boys gained from football, but the league '[didn't] want to see girls take up' the sport and even suggested that

[56] 'No title', *Marble Hill Press* (Marble Hill, MO), 14 December 1905, n.p.
[57] Library of Congress, 'About the Marble Hill Press, 1881-1923', https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89066695/ (accessed 19 March 2019).
[58] 'Games for Girls', *The Evening World's Home Magazine* (New York, NY), 30 November 1905, n.p.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Library of Congress, 'About the Evening World, 1887-1931', http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/ (accessed 10 March 2018).

President Roosevelt should create a new game.[61] The society women were concerned that physical activities designed by men were 'altogether unsuited to girls from a physiological viewpoint', reinforcing commonly held medical attitudes about the impact that contact sports could have on women's health.[62] These comments demonstrate observers' differing views on women playing such a physical sport. Despite these remarks, reports of the games themselves emphasised the young women's skills and did not address these medical beliefs.

When young women played football against male teams in highly competitive and organised games, rather than for fun, the response of authority figures and the media was less accepting. This response was due, in part, to the fact that competitiveness, alongside other qualities gained from sports such as power, strength, and aggression, have long been associated with masculinity.[63] However, reports also highlight authority figures' concerns about the morality of women playing in public and for money. For example, in November 1912, reports surfaced about the 'Vassar Champions', a team of 11 young women in Chicago, who were planning to play a boys' side from a local West Chicago high school.[64] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the girls had a coach, Harry Woods, suggesting that this was a highly organised event.[65] The girls were due to play in front of a paying crowd, and reports indicated that organisers had advertised the game widely, but the match was provoking widespread criticism.[66] The involvement of a promoter and extensive advertising indicates the organisers' desire to make

[61] 'Asks President for New Game for Girls', *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), 2 December 1905, 13.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 3.
[64] 'Girls Cannot Play Football in Chicago', *Daily Gate City* (Keokuk, IA), 18 November 1912, 6.
[65] 'Refuse to Let Girls Play', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 25 November 1912, 13.
[66] 'Girls Cannot Play Football in Chicago', 6; 'Girls Can't Play', *Topeka Daily State Journal* (Topeka, KS), 20 November 1912, 3.

money from the event, and this may have been the cause of more considerable alarm than journalists demonstrated in their reports of other games. It is difficult to assess the young women's class, but the fact that, according to the *Topeka Daily State Journal*, they sought expenses, suggests they were from the working class.[67]

It appears to be the day of the week and the fact that they were playing against boys that were the newspapers' primary worries, not that the girls were playing football. This concern was because of nineteenth-century Blue Laws which aimed to allow Americans a day of rest and religion.[68] As late as 1925 the Norfolk County deputy sheriff arrested players of the Portsmouth Truckers and Richmond Colts baseball teams, alongside the two umpires, for playing professional baseball on a Sunday.[69] Thus, young women playing any sport on a Sunday would be a concern, especially to those with Sabbatarian sensibilities. For example, the *Daily Gate City* mentioned that 'every minister in West Chicago pledged to his congregation that he would oppose the girls playing against a team of men'.[70] They were particularly upset about 'the immorality of "playing football with girls," especially on a Sunday'.[71] Two local clergymen formed a 'vigilance committee' of locals to prevent the game from taking place.[72] The landowner of the ground that the girls intended to play on, Michael Macless, chased the players off. The teams and officials moved to another field, but this land's owner also prevented them from playing there after pressure from the ministers. In a further blow, the promoter N.J. Joyce Jr. (of whom little else is known)

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[67] 'Girls Can't Play', 3.
[68] Jeffery A. Smith, 'Sunday Newspapers and Lived Religion in Late Nineteenth-Century America', *Journal of Church and State* 48, no. 1 (2006): 127.
[69] Peter Wallenstein, *Blue Laws and Black Codes: Conflict, Courts, and Change in Twentieth-Century Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 36.
[70] 'Girls Cannot Play Football in Chicago', 6.
[71] 'Football Game Between "Vassar Girls" and Men Stopped By Citizens', *The Leader* (Guthrie, OK), 20 November 1912, 8.
[72] Ibid.

disappeared with the money.[73] An additional report on 25 November suggests that the girls tried to play again, this time against a local boys' team, the Ripmores, but two police officers stopped them.[74] Lieutenant Miller from the town hall station stated, 'I can't stand for men tackling and roughing it with women, even if it be called sport'.[75] The physical harm that the players may come to appears to have been Miller's primary concern. The report revealed changes to the line-up, stating that the team comprised seven females and four males, instead of the previously reported 11 women. This change suggests that the organisers were finding it difficult to find enough female players, perhaps because of the clergymen's actions.

The media response to this planned Chicago game reflects the pattern established in baseball, where newspapers criticised working-class women who sought money from the sport more than middle-class women who were playing for fun. While newspapers did not heavily criticise the young women in Chicago, an analysis of the reports demonstrates that the media's response differed when compared to the matches in St. Louis and Connecticut. One such difference was through references to the Chicago players' attractiveness. For example, the *Daily Gate City* mentioned that some of the players were 'pretty'.[76] Similarly, the *Topeka State Journal* referred to players by their hair colour, for example, the captain being 'the pretty West Side brunette'.[77] The article even referred to the feminine stereotype of crying when the players reportedly 'returned weeping after ministers succeeded in stopping their game'.[78] This emphasis on emotionality is evidence of Bruce's rule of appropriate femininity and suggests that the newspapers needed to reassure their readers of the players' stereotypical female

[73] Ibid.
[74] 'Refuse to Let Girls Play', 13.
[75] Ibid.
[76] 'Girls Cannot Play', 6;
[77] 'Girls Can't Play', 3.
[78] Ibid.

attributes. An accompanying photograph in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Figure 2.4) stopped short of any need to sexualise the players and provides some evidence that the newspaper did not believe that the women were invading a masculine domain.[79] The picture shows the girls wearing regular football attire, including long trousers, long-sleeved sweatshirts, and helmets, clothing suitable for a contact version of the sport. The photographer did not attempt to highlight the players' attractiveness or sexuality; they simply pictured them in their clothing on the line of scrimmage, just like male players. The editor positioned the photograph at the top and middle of a page about political news, highlighting its importance. An analysis of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in the same month reveals that in a typical 26-page edition (of which 6-10 pages were advertisements and stock listings) there were on average eight photographs per issue. Editors placed most pictures on sports pages, with most editions having an average of one per page. Therefore, many stories did not include photographs, suggesting particular editorial interest in pictures of these young women.

[79] 'Girl Football Players Rout Men Opponents in Argument Although Beaten in Game', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 October 1912, 3.

Figure 2.4: ‘Girl Football Players Rout Men Opponents’.

Despite football’s close association with traditional concepts of masculinity, young women from a variety of classes played against male sides in the sport’s early years. The fact that only a handful of examples have left traces makes it challenging to establish a definitive pattern of acceptance. However, the press coverage that these games attracted does not suggest any widespread concern that these women were disrupting the sport’s gender order. Journalists, and players’ own families, accepted these activities. Many of these women came from middle- and upper-class families and the fact that they were playing for fun helped the press’s acceptance. Where games had greater commercialism and elements of professionalism, the reaction was increasingly adverse. That these were mainly one-off events likely assisted in preventing undue concern as the women were not encroaching onto a traditionally male domain for a prolonged period. These case studies illuminate a different manner

of women's participation in football and one that the media reacted to in a mostly positive way.

'She Bowls 'Em Over': Newspaper Coverage of Girls Playing Alongside Male Players

While women were able to play against male opposition from the 1890s onwards, their opportunity to play alongside male teammates did not arise until four decades later. The media reaction to six young women, three of whom played in highly physical contact positions (Esther Burnham, Frankie Groves, and Sharon Dickerson) and three kickers, a role that requires less direct contact with male opposition (Jacquelyn Frecka, Luverne Wise, and Agnes Rifner), demonstrates that the coaches' reasons for including these young women on their teams impacted the press response. Esther Burnham, 14, played on the otherwise all-male Middlefield Air Cadets football team in the mid-1930s.[80] She was already in her second year of playing for them when reports of her participation surfaced in 1935.[81] Frankie Groves of Stinnett, Texas, played for her high school team in 1947, while Sharon "Bobbie" Dickerson briefly played for the Norb Roll Sheriffs in the Otto Pee Wee Football League in Kentucky in 1957.[82] The three kickers played on their respective high school teams: Frecka, from Sciotoville, Ohio, in late 1937, Alabama-native Wise and Indiana-based Rifner in 1939 and 1943 respectively. When coaches included females on their otherwise male teams because they were the best available players, newspapers praised their ability. However, when coaches incorporated female players for novelty value, newspapers emphasised the young women's appearances.

[80] 'Star Pivot "Man" on Junior Football Team in Connecticut is a 14-Year-Old Girl', *New York Times*, 4 November 1935, 28.
[81] 'Girl Football Star Plays Just Because She Likes It', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 27 November 1935, 9.
[82] 'One Texas High School Team to Have "New Look" Tonight with Girl Player', *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), 14 November 1947, 6; 'Girl, Secret Out, Keeps Place on Football Team', *New York Times*, 4 October 1957, 18.

Newspaper reports about these young women were remarkably positive. The fact that the press mainly reported on the players without sexualising or belittling them demonstrates that journalists did not consider these women to be disrupting football's assumed male dominance. In some cases, newspapers linked these players' participation with women's rights. For example, a *Corsicana Daily Sun* article began with the comment: 'Frankie Groves starts a revolution tonight — a one-girl uprising against the unwritten rule that has barred the feminine gender from rock 'em and sock 'em team sports.'[83] A similar response was evident in the *Courier-Journal*'s coverage of Rifner's eventual ban by the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA). The article stated that she had an honorary place on the bench 'and there she must sit simply because it's a bit revolutionary for one of the supposedly weaker sex to be out there on the field with the boys'.[84] This comment suggests that the author had no issue with women playing football and that Rifner could compete on the same level as male players. Despite this apparent acceptance, some coaches and authority figures were aware that women playing football could challenge the sport as a masculine domain. As a result, they restricted female participation on male teams through bans, or by reducing them to novelty figures that contrasted with the male players' manliness.

The prevailing gender order in football in the 1930s onwards was similar to earlier years and largely restricted women to the periphery. Women's expected role in football continued to be as a spectator, as evidenced in Judson Philips and Robert Wood's 1936 *Hold 'Em Girls: The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Men and Football*. Philips and Wood informed women about how to be good spectators and impress their dates. The authors assumed a heteronormative approach where women accompanied men to the

[83] 'One Texas High School Team', 6.
[84] Joe Creason, 'New Castle's Gal Gridder', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 31 October 1943, 18-20.

game and were likely to admire the male physique. '[N]aturally', they wrote, 'your escort expects you to look your best': they advised their readers to dress warmly, thereby retaining their 'natural, healthy appearance' rather than looking 'like a chattering Egyptian mummy'.[85] They recommended what women should and should not say, including to 'not comment on the beauty of the stadium or the color of the crowd more than twice'.[86] The book — which today could be seen as a model in mansplaining — also had chapters titled, 'Invitation to the Game', 'Pre-Game Etiquette', and 'Post-Game Etiquette', demonstrating that women's presence was primarily a social occasion.[87] The authors' assumption that the women would be more interested in the players' appearances than the game is evident when they reminded them not to: 'make asinine remarks about how handsome the picture of a certain player is in the program' and 'do not use the word "cute" in connection with football players'.[88] The female spectator's role was to admire male prowess and conform to the kind of idealised femininity that male football spectators expected.

Despite this discourse, an analysis of the positive media response to Burnham, Groves, and Dickerson provides little evidence that newspapers considered their participation as a disruption to the hyper-masculine sport. The articles about these players also undermine stereotypes regarding women's traditional role in football because all three young women played in highly physical positions: Burnham at centre, Groves at right tackle, and Dickerson at end. These girls were playing in positions that Walter Camp noted met 'nine tenths of the aggressive work of the opponents' and consequently they could make their teammates appear less masculine in

[85] Judson Phillips and Robert Wood, *Hold 'Em Girls: The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Men and Football* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1936), 7.
[86] Ibid., 11.
[87] Ibid., contents page.
[88] Ibid., 12.

comparison.[89] Widespread interest in Burnham in 1935 is apparent with stories in newspapers across the nation including New York, Texas, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Missouri. A *New York Times* article revealed the praise she received from both her coach, who described her as a 'valuable player,' and the spectators, who supportively shouted 'Atta girl! Burnham!'[90] The reporter also commented that she was 'one of the team's bulwarks' on defence and 'ma[de] a specialty of intercepting passes'. A *Shamokin News-Dispatch* article referred to her as 'Esther "Flash" Burnham', thus praising her for her speed.[91] A *Reading Times* headline reported that 'Girl Grid Star Aids Boys' Team to Triumph' and that she 'figured largely' in the game, including a fake punt which she passed deep down the field resulting in a touchdown on the next play.[92] The author commented on Burnham's high skill level and how she 'tore holes in the Indian line', but also revealed that opposition spectators booed her after she fled the field when a female spectator shouted to the opposing team 'Don't let a girl beat you.'[93] The *Decatur Herald* leapt to Burnham's defence, referring to the media fuss as a carnival. On mentioning the spectators' negative comments, the reporter added that 'while it is a man's world … it is unjust, and we'd be glad to help you beat the discriminations' and referred to Burnham as a 'hero'.[94] This spectator's response was a minority one, and the newspapers' responses did not reflect it. Similarly, articles reporting on Groves emphasised how well she played by stating: 'Texas Girl Tackle Excels' and 'Girl Gridder Wins Lavish Praise in Football Debut'.[95] Reporters also

[89] Walter Camp, *American Football* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896), 41.
[90] 'Star Pivot "Man" on Junior Football Team in Connecticut is a 14-Year-Old Girl', 28.
[91] 'Esther Burnham, Female Gridder, Quits Football', *Shamokin News-Dispatch* (Shamokin, PA), 15 October 1936, S1.
[92] 'Girl Grid Star Aids Boys' Team to Triumph', *Reading Times* (Reading, PA), 5 November 1935, 16.
[93] 'Girl Wins Grid Tilt', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 November 1935, n.p.
[94] 'Football Rights for Women', *Decatur Herald* (Decatur, IL), 11 November 1935, 4.
[95] 'Texas Girl Tackle Excels', *New York Times*, 15 November 1947, 14; William Barnard, 'Girl Gridder Wins Lavish Praise in Football Debut', *Waco News-Tribune* (Waco, TX), 15 November 1947, 1.

mentioned that she went into the game for eight plays and 'bowled over two opposing male linemen and came out unhurt', and the coach stated that she 'was wonderful' and 'exceeded all my expectations'.[96] These young women were in direct physical competition with opposition players and were, in part, responsible for preventing players from getting to the team's quarterback. The fact that newspapers praised them suggests that the media was unconcerned about the physicality that these players demonstrated.

Not only did the newspapers praise the young women, but in some cases, they suggested that the girls were the teams' best players. Women playing better than men would disrupt the era's assumptions that football was a masculine sport; thus, this praise is highly significant. For example, the *Boston Daily Globe* emphasised that 'there was no score until Esther entered the game' and that she 'punts and passes brilliantly'.[97] Similarly, reports about Dickerson mentioned that unnamed sources considered her the best player on the team and that she scored a touchdown on 'a 10-yard burst straight up the middle'.[98] Reporters would not have emphasised the importance of female players on a team if they genuinely believed that they posed a threat to assumed male dominance in the sport.

Newspapers also appeared unconcerned about the physicality of the young women's play, further indicating that the press did not consider these girls a threat to the sport. Headlines the day after Groves' first game included 'Charming Miss Mows Down Grid Bruisers', 'She Bowls 'Em Over', and 'Girl, 16, Plays Right Tackle, Guesses She "Got

[96] 'Girl, 16, Plays Right Tackle, Guesses She "Got Little Rough"', *St. Louis Star and Times* (St Louis, MO), 15 November 1947, 1.
[97] 'Girl Shines in Football Game', *Boston Daily Globe*, 5 November 1935, 21.
[98] Harry Reckner, 'Girl in League of 300 Boys', *Progress-Index* (Petersburg, VA), 8 November 1957, 12.

Little Rough" '.[99] Phrases such as 'mows down' and 'bowls over' suggest that the newspapers believed that not only was Groves physical, but she was also potentially stronger than her male opponents. Similarly, the *Courier-Journal* referred to Dickerson as a 'Stalwart Player' and a 'hard-hitting end', and claimed that she 'played an outstanding game' in a 12-0 win.[100] The *Shreveport Times* compared Dickerson's physicality to being hit by a truck.[101] These young women were physical players, yet newspapers still did not condemn them for their participation. In emphasising the physical nature of the young women's playing style, newspapers were suggesting that women could play the sport in a similar manner to male players. While highlighting the physicality of these girls' play in headlines indicates some surprise at their ability, newspapers appeared unconcerned that these young women were a serious threat to the hyper-masculine sport.

Reports include some evidence of Bruce's rule of comparison to male sports, with its underlying assumption that the male game is superior. For example, the *New York Times* headline and report referred to Burnham as being the 'star pivot "man" ' or 'all-around pivot "man" ', and the author made a brief mention of her 'black curly hair' hidden below her helmet.[102] Similarly, the *Daily Boston Globe* described Burnham as presenting 'the appearance of a typical schoolboy player'.[103] Referring to a female player as a man was not unique and, as with women in cricket today being called 'batsmen', there has always been ambivalence about it. Mary Jo Festle opined that a

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[99] 'Charming Miss Mows Down Grid Bruisers', *Ogdensburg Journal* (Ogdensburg, NY), 15 November 1957, 4; 'She Bowls 'Em Over', *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, IA), 15 November 1947, 9; 'Girl, 16, Plays Right Tackle, Guesses She "Got Little Rough"', 1.
[100] 'Football Team's Stalwart Player To Stay', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 4 October 1957, 8 of Section 2; 'Girl, Secret Out, Keeps Place on Football Team', *New York Times*, 4 October 1957, 18; 'Judges Win, 12-0', *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, OH), 18 October 1957, 24.
[101] 'Girl Assured Spot on Boys' Football Team', *Shreveport Times* (Shreveport, LA), 4 October 1957, 3A.
[102] 'Star Pivot "Man" on Junior Football Team in Connecticut is a 14-Year-Old Girl', 28.
[103] 'Girl Shines in Football Game', 21.

description of a woman having played like a man worked as ‘a compliment and an insult’.[104] In Burnham’s case, it is impossible to establish whether the reporters definitively meant their use of the word ‘man’ as a compliment, insult, or in a historically gender-neutral manner simply meaning player. Their inclusion of the word in quotation marks highlights the unusual nature of her participation and hints that she was displaying the attributes of a male player. The *Reading Times* also compared Burnham’s appearance to that of a male player and mentioned that opponents and spectators ‘seldom realize a girl is playing’.[105] The comment could also have been tapping into concerns over her sexuality by suggesting that she was manly. Within the broader reading of the newspapers’ largely supportive responses, articles were likely praising her play.

Some newspaper reports provide evidence of Bruce’s rule of ambivalence, where journalists juxtapose references to players’ attractiveness, or female stereotypes, with comments about their skill. However, such references were rare, and reporters often made a counterpoint to demonstrate that the stereotype did not detract from the players’ groundbreaking performances. For example, a seven-line *Daily Republican* article mentioned Burnham crying after a game; but rather than use her tears as evidence of a feminine stereotype, the reporter commented that ‘Esther can’t be a sissy and play football’.[106] The article’s headline ‘Cry Baby? No, She’s a Grid Star’ also emphasised her skill. Burnham had demonstrated that she was not a stereotypical girl by playing football. The media simultaneously praised Burnham while also highlighting feminine qualities like emotionality, although most newspapers did not include reports

[104] Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women’s Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 52.
[105] ‘Atta Girl! Burnham! Puzzles Grid Fans Watching Middlefield Cadets’, *Reading Times* (Reading, PA), 6 November 1935, 16.
[106] ‘Cry Baby? No, She’s a Grid Star’, *Daily Republican* (Marion, IL), 11 December1935, 6.

of her tears. Similarly, the sub-heading to one headline about Groves' performance, 'Girl Gridder Wins Lavish Praise in Football Debut', was 'Without Smearing Lipstick', the perfect illustration of media ambivalence.[107] Groves herself appeared happy that she had not smeared her lipstick: the reporter quoted her as apparently saying 'good … I won't have to put on a new paint job'.[108] The inclusion of the reference to lipstick could indicate that the *Waco News-Tribune* wanted to reassure its sports page readers that despite her place on the field Groves still adhered to the kind of behaviour that they expected. It could be equally valid that Groves felt a need to conform to feminine norms as a sort of apologetic behaviour. Her comment could also be an example of Vikki Krane's notion that 'females continue policing themselves, emphasizing the importance of balancing the perceptions of masculine athleticism with feminine appearance'.[109] In commenting on her lipstick, Groves also demonstrates elements of Mulvey's male gaze theory. For example, Amy Godoy-Pressland states that the object of the gaze 'adopt[s] "feminine" behaviour and styling' when they participate in 'typically male sports'.[110] Groves was likely aware of the stereotypical social norms to which newspaper readers expected her to conform and thus felt a need to demonstrate that she adhered to them in some way.

Bruce's rules of non-sport-related aspects and sexualisation are occasionally evident in reports. The 1930s saw many societal anxieties over female athletes who the media linked with the 'mannish lesbian', 'a label that brought harsh condemnation'.[111] Cohen, in her history of women's baseball, notes that to counteract this image 'the eroticised

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[107] Barnard, 'Girl Gridder Wins Lavish Praise in Football Debut', 1.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Vikki Krane, 'We Can Be Athletic and Feminine, But Do We Want To? Challenging Hegemonic Femininity in Women's Sport', *Quest* 53, no. 1 (2001): 116.
[110] Amy Godoy-Pressland, '"No Hint of Bulging Muscles": The Surveillance of Sportswomen's Bodies in British Print Media', *Journalism* 17, no. 6 (2016): 754.
[111] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 58.

heterosexual sports competitor also emerged'.[112] This type of coverage was not evident in reports about Burnham, although the lack of sexualisation could be due to her being only 14 at the time. Orthodox assumptions required Burnham, as an adolescent, to 'exhibit her sexual attractiveness and test her ability to charm the teen-age boy but never "go too far" '.[113] Consequently, newspapers' sexualisation of Burnham would have been inappropriate. Of the 21 articles referring to Groves playing football that formed the basis of this analysis, only six referred to her being 'pretty', and one called her a 'cute little Texas lassie'; most articles simply did not emphasise her looks.[114] However, these comments differ from references to male players. Reports on boys' high school matches in the *Vernon Daily Record* generally covered the team rather than focusing on individual players. When the paper identified a particular player, it tended to be his name, followed by his team and position, such as 'Thornton, Steer quarterback' or 'Lawson, Coyote fullback'.[115] The *Corsicana Daily Sun* similarly made few references about individual players. When they did, observations were commonly about their style of play rather than their looks, such as 'sensational Henry Stollenwerck'.[116] Some articles referred to physical attributes that were relevant to the players' positions, such as a reference to Kelly Burkhart as the 'big fullback'.[117] In focusing on the physical characteristics that were irrelevant to Groves' playing position, Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects is evident. This type of coverage

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[112] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 41.
[113] Mary Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 287-8.
[114] 'One Texas High School Team to Have "New Look" Tonight', 6; 'Girl, 16, Plays Right Tackle, Guesses She "Got Little Rough"', 1; 'She Bowls 'Em Over', 9; 'Charming Miss Mows Down Grid Bruisers', 4; 'Li'l Frankie Out of Football: Team Folds', *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, NV), 28 January 1948, 13; 'It's A She', *Vernon Daily Record* (Vernon, TX), 14 November 1947, 5.
[115] 'Visitors Throw Chill Into Local Fans and Gridders', *Vernon Daily Record* (Vernon, TX), 15 November 1947, 4; "Flap" Jones, 'Gallant Vernon Gridders Bow to Superior Eleven', *Vernon Daily Record* (Vernon, TX), 22 November 1947, 3.
[116] Paul Moore, 'Corsicana, Waxahachie Battle Begins on Tiger Field At 8pm', *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), 7 November 1947, 6.
[117] Talmadge Canant, 'Bengals Strike Play Dirt Third Play Play of Contest', *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), 1 November 1947, 7.

demonstrates the press' desire to ensure that Groves adhered to the orthodox femininity that readers expected. However, comments like these were not the dominant discourse; the emphasis was on praising these young women. None of the newspaper articles about Dickerson included comments about her looks, even though all three players competed at a time when educators questioned female sporting competition on the basis that it 'was a masculine drive'.[118] That newspapers did not extensively emphasise the young women's appearances suggests that they were treating them in a similar manner to male players whose looks were never the subject of match reports. If newspapers were genuinely concerned that these young women were a threat to football's masculine space, treating them in the same way as male players undermined this apprehension.

Further evidence that the media did not feel that these young women were challenging football's masculine space is apparent in the photographs and drawings that accompanied the articles. These images followed a similar pattern to the written reports and rarely sexualised the young women. Photographs did not emphasise the players' bare skin, nor did they picture them in sexually suggestive poses. For example, the only photograph that newspapers used of media-shy Burnham was of her walking towards the camera wearing trousers that were just over the knee and a long-sleeved shirt.[119] The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* included the same image but as a drawing.[120] In neither case did the pictures emphasise Burnham's figure or attractiveness. Both the *Corsicana Daily Sun* and *Vernon Daily Record* included a non-sexualised photograph (Figure 2.5) of Groves tackling a male player.[121] The picture showed her in regulation

[118] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), xx.
[119] 'Girl Football Star', *East Liverpool Review*, 12 November 1935, 13.
[120] 'A Girl Football Player – and a Star on a Boys' Team', *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (St Louis, MO), 24 November 1935, M61.
[121] 'One Texas High School Team to Have "New Look" Tonight', 6; 'It's A She', 5.

clothing with her arms wrapped around the other player's leg. While her hair was coming out of her helmet, the image did not emphasise her looks. The players' positions and the photographer's angle suggest that this was a staged picture. Thus, the editor included a photograph of her in a physical role, rather than one that emphasised female stereotypes, suggesting that they accepted Groves' participation. The *Montana Standard* article on Frecka did not sexualise her either. It merely included two staged photographs, both showing her in regulation uniform, one with the ball under her arm and the other of her kicking. The pictures did not emphasise her figure or show any bare skin beyond her face and hands, nor was she in a sexually suggestive pose.[122] In presenting the young women in this way, editors were unconcerned that these players were a threat to football's masculinity.

[122] 'Girl Place-Kick Specialist Gets Into Games', *Montana Standard* (Butte, MT), 16 January 1938, 8.

Figure 2.5: ‘Girl Gridder’.

The media also promoted these young women as role models, a further demonstration that they did not disrupt the assumed male superiority in football. For example, Groves gained one point in the Associated Press (AP) poll for the 1947 Woman Athlete-of-the-Year contest.[123] Journalists scored athletes on five points for first place, three for second, and one for third place, so a sole AP member gave Groves one third-place vote. Groves also inspired others, as the *New York Times* mentioned that three other girls wanted to join the team.[124] The *Odessa American* stated that Groves received fan mail and a male player at a New York high school gave her a football pin.[125] Similarly,

[123] ‘Babe Zaharias Is Top Woman Athlete of ‘47’, *Eau Claire Leader* (Eau Claire, WI), 15 January 1948, 10.
[124] ‘Texas Girl Tackle Excels’, 14.
[125] ‘Twas Short Grid Career for Frankie’, *Odessa American* (Odessa, TX), 4 December 1947, 5.

in December 1940, the coaches who chose the All-State team gave Wise 'honorable mention' at the quarterback position.[126] This honour was even though she was not a quarterback but a kicker and made only occasional passes. The only evidence of her playing in the quarterback position comes from the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* and the *Atlanta Constitution*. The *Press-Gazette* referred to her as a 'double-threat backfield ace' after she threw a long ball to the captain, and the *Atlanta Constitution* stated that she had added passing to her skillset and threw the ball for points in one game.[127] Coaches may have nominated her seriously, but, oddly, it was not for the position in which she usually played. The panel's decision to give Wise an 'honorable mention' probably resulted from the unlikely scenario of having a female play at quarterback in an otherwise all-male team, even if only briefly. Playing at that position for just one game would not have provided enough evidence for the coaches to include her for any other reason. Dickerson was also the subject of media interest, and an unspecified radio show interviewed her discussing 'how she "survived" playing as the only girl in Cincinnati's 300-boy football league'.[128] The use of the term 'survived' indicates that there could have been an element of danger in what she was doing, but was more likely an ironic comment on the novelty of a female football player. These examples demonstrate broader interest from not just the print media but also the broadcast media and reveal that these young women attracted widespread positive attention.

While Burnham, Groves, and Dickerson played in highly physical positions, Frecka played as the kicker, a role with less contact with the opposition, and yet the media responded to her in a similar manner to the other female players. By January 1938,

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[126] 'Miss Luverne Wise Gets All-Star Mention', *Racine Journal-Times* (Racine, WI), 5 December 1940, 24.
[127] Walter Dustmann, 'Luverne Wise is Sensation On High School Grid Outfit', *Green Bay Press-Gazette* (Green Bay, WI), 23 October 1940, 7; 'Pretty Blonde Slings Passes for Boys' Club', 18.
[128] 'Topics', *Tampa Bay Times* (Tampa, FL), 8 December 1957, 22.

reports in the *Washington Post* and *Montana Standard* stated that Frecka had played 'three times during one game of the recent season', missing one kick and having two others blocked.[129] The *Portsmouth Times* called her a 'kicking specialist', but the same page also found space for jokes about her. For example, the columnist Pete Minego joked in his 'Sport Gossip' column that his neighbours had told him not to make so much fuss about a girl kicker because 'his wife had been kicking ever since they were married'.[130] This comment links Frecka to the stereotype of the nagging wife. Minego occasionally used this kind of humour in his columns, but he never made similarly lazy stereotypical comments about male players. For example, on 2 April 1938, Minego joked about an 'uptown woman who bats 100% when it comes to spying behind the dining room curtains', so his joke about Frecka fits his style of writing.[131] Frecka's teammates and the local media praised her playing ability, and of the four articles regarding her football career, Minego's column was the only one to highlight any stereotypes. The other reports simply stated that she kicked field goals and was keen to remain playing.[132] Newspapers were unconcerned over her participation in football, although she did not play in more than one game in that season. The fact that she did not play for very long, and when she did it was in a position with less physical contact, no doubt made press acceptance easier.

Little in the newspapers' responses to these young women suggest any press or football authorities' anxiety that their participation disrupted football's gender order. Reporters widely praised them for their skill and, in some cases, the young women

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[129] 'Girl Place-Kick Specialist Gets Into Games', *Washington Post* (Washington DC), 16 January 1938, Y8; 'Girl Place-Kick Specialist Gets Into Games', *Montana Standard* (Butte, MT), 8.
[130] Pete Minego, 'Sport Gossip', *Portsmouth Times* (Portsmouth, OH), 20 November 1937, 7.
[131] Pete Minego, 'Sport Gossip', *Portsmouth Times* (Portsmouth, OH), 2 April 1938, 4.
[132] 'Girl to Get Her Chance to Score', *Evening Independent* (Massillon, OH), 12 November 1937, 19; 'Johnny Moore's Co-Ed Grid Player', *Daily Courier* (Connellsville, PA), 24 December 1937, 8; 'Girl Place-Kick Specialist Gets Into Games', 8; 'Girl Place-Kick Specialist Gets Into Games', Y8.

even became role models for others. Newspapers' lack of emphasis on the players' attractiveness further suggests that these young women found press support for their participation in football. Similarly, the lack of evidence of Bruce's rules of media representation in these articles indicates that the media mostly demonstrated a positive attitude towards these female players. The fact that their coaches accepted them certainly helped the media to do the same, but when coaches included young women for novelty, the media response was markedly different.

'Not Exactly Ladylike': The Decline of Women on Male Teams

Evidence that young women may have disrupted football's historical gender order comes from coaches' use of young women as novelties on football teams and authority figures' bans of female players. Some coaches included young women as a form of novelty to publicise their teams, taking steps to ensure that the women and girls starkly contrasted to the male players. In addition, some authority figures banned these young women from competing, indicating that these men were concerned about female participation in the sport. The media response to the young women whom coaches used for novelty in 1939 and 1943 reflected their inclusion for the amusement of spectators and thus frequently emphasised the players' attractiveness.

Newspaper articles about Agnes Rifner and Luverne Wise provide clear evidence that coaches used these young women as novelties. For example, the *Courier-Journal* reported that coach Griz Baker saw Rifner in a gym class 'and invited her to work out with the team as a novelty'.[133] In Wise's case, her coach, Andy Edington, was full of praise for the player, whom he called a 'natural kicker'. Edington hoped to get her a football scholarship and mentioned that he 'wanted to add some color to the team and

[133] 'And Agnes to Boot', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 10 September 1943, 8.

thought of the idea when he heard the co-eds complaining that football was entirely a man's game'.[134] He stated that 'she'll pull in bigger crowds next year when her kicking improves'.[135] His plan worked, as reports mentioned that she 'attract[ed] more spectators than any two teams the school has fielded'.[136] Other articles suggested that the fans wanted to see touchdowns only so that they could 'see his kicking specialist trip daintily on to the field to make the conversion', although no spectators' comments confirm this belief.[137] Newspaper reports about Wise came from across the country, from Hawaii to Delaware, and Wisconsin to Alabama via syndication from wire services. This coverage suggests that Edington was successful in drawing attention to his team.

The media response to Rifner and Wise stands in stark contrast to that of Burnham, Groves, Dickerson, and Frecka, the result of their coaches different reasons for including them on their teams. Instead of praising these players and comparing their participation to male football players, these reports emphasised Rifner's and Wise's attractiveness, including a need to reinforce the differences between them and their teammates. The first report on Wise, published in Allentown's *Morning Call* in November 1939, referred to her as 'svelte, pretty Luverne Wise, a 17-year-old blonde Venus', a phrase that other reports utilised.[138] Almost all articles about Wise referred to her as 'blonde', while other comments mentioning her beauty also stand out. The

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[134] Walter Dustmann, 'Alabama School Boasts Feminine Place-Kicker', *Honolulu Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), 24 November 1939, 9.
[135] Walter Dustmann, 'Girl Player Kicks Extra Points for Alabama High School Eleven', *Morning Call* (Allentown, PA), 17 November 1939, 40.
[136] 'Puts New Kick in Goal Kicking', *Port Huron Times-Herald* (Port Huron, MI), 25 November 1939, 10.
[137] 'Kicking Co-Ed Draws Crowds to Grid Games', *Logansport Pharos-Tribune* (Logansport, IN), 18 November 1939, 2.
[138] Walter Dustmann, 'Girl Player Kicks Extra Points for Alabama High School Eleven', 40; 'Kicking Co-Ed Draws Crowds to Grid Games', 2; 'Alabama School Boasts Feminine Place-Kicker', 9.

Arizona Republic, for example, referred to her being 'as vivacious as she is shapely', while the *Atlanta Constitution* referred to her as a 'pretty, shapely blonde'.[139] Such phrases are examples of what Jan Wright and Gill Clarke referred to as 'heterosexual credentials' that help reassure readers of the players' heterosexuality. The *Wilmington Morning News* contrasted Wise's role with more conventional female participation: 'She didn't lead any cheers; she went into the Atmore backfield.'[140] The journalist also reported that the opposition players were apparently 'plenty bewildered by having to try to tackle an attractive girl whom they would rather lead through a rug-cutting session on a dance floor'.[141] This comment demonstrates that her role was an anomaly, but also placed her in the stereotypical female position of dancing with male football players instead of competing against them, a scenario that readers would have understood. Reports similarly referred to Rifner as a 'comely blonde' and 'blonde, buxom', and one mentioned that the coach kept her out of playing a game as 'the players' tempers, together with weather conditions, were not exactly ladylike'.[142] Rifner could only contrast with the male players' masculinity if she conformed to the spectators' ideals of orthodox femininity; hence Baker prevented her from playing. These reports about Rifner demonstrate Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects where newspapers highlight elements of the player's life at the expense of reporting on their sporting performance.

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[139] 'Pretty Blonde Slings Passes for Boys' Club', *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 October 1940, 18; Jan Wright and Gill Clarke, 'Sport, the Media and the Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality: A Case Study of Women's Rugby Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 3 (1999): 238.
[140] 'Girl Passes and Place-Kicks Conversion for Boys' Team', *Wilmington Morning News* (Wilmington, DE), 23 October 1940, 22.
[141] Ibid.
[142] 'Indiana Girl on Football Team', *The Express* (Lock Haven, PA), 15 September 1943, 9; 'And Not in a Chorus', *Muncie Evening Press* (Muncie, IN), 18 September 1943, 9; 'Girl Gridder Kept Out of Game', *Des Moines Tribune* (Des Moines, IA), 14 September 1943, 15.

Some newspaper reports about Wise went beyond discussing her attractiveness and moved into more explicitly sexualising her. For example, the *Arizona Republic* reported on the "0" she wore on her back and how this led the crowds to start chants of "oomph, oomph, oomph", a phrase that George Moore stated was 'coined for Ann Sheridan', the actress and singer.[143] The phrase, *Life* claimed, could refer to 'a feminine desirability which can be observed with pleasure' or 'the indefinable something that lies in women's eyes'.[144] *Life*'s explanation of this term hints at female sexuality and underlying eroticism. While the *Arizona Republic* was simply reporting the crowd's chants and otherwise had a positive response to Wise, by mentioning these elements, the newspaper played an important role in sexualising her. In making these comments, the journalists were emphasising that Wise was not a football player: she was, instead, an object of sexual desire. These reports demonstrate Bruce's rule of sexualisation with the media objectifying Wise and highlighting her sexual attractiveness. In depicting her in this way, journalists reduced any threat she may have posed to football's inherent masculinity.

The newspapers constructed, coded, and placed the accompanying photographs of Wise and Rifner in a way to ensure that these women did not threaten football's predominant masculinity. The pictures' common theme was to highlight the women's differences from their male counterparts. The photographers' emphasis in the images was on the young women's differing uniform compared to their male teammates. Wise wore 'attractive ballet shorts [and] a tight silk blouse' rather than a regulation

[143] George Moore, 'Moore About Sports', *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), 22 November 1939, 2.
[144] Noel Busch, 'America's Oomph Girl', *Life*, 24 July 1939, 64. According to *Life* magazine, a number of male celebrities including Busby Berkeley and David Niven gave Sheridan the name 'Oomph Girl' following a dinner they attended.

uniform.[145] She also wore a special leather helmet 'designed to show off her curls'.[146] Photographs of her playing the following year showed her wearing a silk skirt instead of shorts, and the *Daily News-Journal* pictured her in a skirt and silk blouse, without a helmet, carrying the ball under one arm with a male player in conventional uniform chasing her from behind.[147] The move from shorts allowed readers to see up her skirt and demonstrates Mulvey's argument that 'fetishism averts male fear of the female body'.[148] In this case, the focus on her skirt, compared to her male teammate's trousers, fetishizes Wise as a sexual object in an attempt to reduce any male readers' concern that she presented a threat to the other players' masculinity. The photographer staged the picture as this was not a usual situation for a kicker: she did not need to be carrying the ball or to be chased, so the photographer captured it to highlight the amusement and novelty of seeing a female football player. The editor placed the photograph on the AP Picture News page alongside a picture of a statue to commemorate the 'Rough Riders' and a photograph of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. This positioning indicates that a photograph of a girl playing football was both important and unusual. Similarly, photographs of Rifner pictured her in loose shorts and a high kick pose that revealed most of the skin on her legs. While the pose was common in reports of male players, the bare legs, and occasional suggestive headline, differ from those articles.[149] The pictures are also examples of a similar application of male gaze to those seen in photographs of Wise. One headline 'And Not in a Chorus', for example, made an explicit link between Rifner's pose and that of chorus girls, who were 'on display for public amusement and pleasure', and whose

[145] Dustmann, 'Girl Player Kicks Extra Points for Alabama High School Eleven', 40.
[146] Dustmann, 'Alabama School Boasts Feminine Place-Kicker', 9.
[147] 'Class by Herself', *Daily News-Journal* (Murfreesboro, TN), 4 November 1940, 5.
[148] Godoy-Pressland, 'No Hint of Bulging Muscles', 749.
[149] 'And Not in a Chorus', 9; 'I.H.S.A.A. Ruling Sends Agnes to Bench for Season', *Palladium-Item and Sun-Telegram* (Richmond, IN), 22 September 1943, 11; 'Ruled Out', *Muncie Morning Star* (Muncie, IN), 22 September 1943, 8.

'choice of profession broke with acceptable behaviour for respectable women' as late as the 1940s.[150] By comparing Rifner to a chorus girl, the article was not just highlighting her femininity but was also suggesting that her behaviour was not particularly respectable.

Feature articles about Wise and Rifner similarly highlighted their differences to men, suggesting that editors wanted to emphasise the women's lack of threat to football's gender order. For example, the *Muncie Sunday Star* included four photographs of Wise as part of an article titled 'Football with a Feminine Kick'. Two of the images showed her in staged game situations, one from inside the huddle where she stood surrounded by her teammates, and one kicking shot, which looked directly up her silk skirt, again fetishizing her as a focus of the male gaze. A third picture showed her in class, and the fourth was her sitting under a tree with a teammate.[151] In this final image, it is also possible to see up her skirt as she sat with her knees raised. The photographs had minimal captions and simply stated who she was and that she kicked extra points; the emphasis was on the pictures. The *Courier-Journal* presented Rifner in a similar manner, and she was the focus of an article in their Sunday magazine. These reports fit the pattern of Sunday newspapers that frequently included 'entertaining content' as well as women's pages and supplements.[152] The accompanying photographs showed her in various team situations, including listening to the coach, sitting on the bench, running with the team in practice, and kicking.[153] Similar to those of Wise, these photographs presented a stark contrast between the male players' clothing and Rifner's white, loose shorts. While these shorts were clearly in contrast to her teammates'

[150] Kellee Van Aken, 'Race and Gender in the Broadway Chorus' (PhD thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 2006), 76.
[151] 'Football with a Feminine Kick', *Muncie Sunday Star* (Muncie, IN), 24 November 1940, 11.
[152] Gerald Baldasty, *Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 52, 126.
[153] Creason, 'New Castle's Gal Gridder', 18-20.

trousers, little else in the image sexualised her as the photographer showed her wearing the same team sweatshirt that all players wore. Some of these pictures showed the men dressed in their protective padding, representing them as active heroes, while Wise and Rifner were passive objects, not requiring this kind of battle dress. This representation exemplifies Roberta Sassatelli's description of the male gaze, wherein the male hero acts and the female is passive.[154] The young women did not need the same clothing as their teammates since they were not going to play such an active role in the match. Newspapers demonstrated a keen interest in images of these players whose coaches were using them as a form of novelty. The clothing that coaches chose to dress their players in emphasised the young women's figures to provide more considerable contrasts between them and their male teammates, and newspapers highlighted this in their use of photographs. Such contrasts provide evidence of Dunja Antunovic's 'heterosexy ideal' that emphasises the differences between men and women.[155] In contrasting these young women to their teammates in this manner, football's gender order was clear.

It was not just the print media that found novelty value in these women's stories. In Wise's case, at least one newsreel company also joined in, and their coverage used the same visual codes as the newspapers to emphasise her conventional attractiveness and stereotypical female behaviour. Newsreels were in the business of entertainment, a support act for the main feature at a cinema screening, and not a valuable information source. According to David Mould, newsreels 'sought the visually dramatic or bizarre, neglecting important but pictorially dull stories'.[156] The footage of

[154] Roberta Sassatelli, 'Interview with Laura Mulvey: Gender, Gaze and Technology in Film Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 5 (2011): 124.
[155] Dunja Antunovic, '"You Had to Cover Nadia Comaneci": "Points of Change" in Coverage of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 13 (2016): 1552.
[156] David Mould, 'Historical Trends in the Criticism of the Newsreel and Television News 1930-1955', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 12, no. 3 (1984): 119.

an attractive female football player contrasted with her male teammates would have certainly been visually dramatic. The 53-second-long footage initially showed Wise sat inside in her trademark silk uniform applying her makeup and having her hair brushed by other women, after which she winked at the camera. In acknowledging the viewers, she demonstrates the 'true essence of being seen', a key element of male gaze theory.[157] Wise appears aware of the assumed heterosexual male audience members, or the director suggested that she wink. The footage also showed her in a team meeting amongst her male teammates, where her clothing starkly contrasted with their conventional football attire. Shots of the game showed Wise running onto the field to kick the extra point, after which she smiled at the camera.[158] Such a shot was an apparent effort by the director and editor to contrast her participation with her male teammates, who never addressed the camera directly. The footage also showed male and female cheerleaders, although this was increasingly common in the 1940s as women took on cheerleading roles during the war years.[159] Shots focused on the female spectators, indicating that Wise had perhaps attracted more women to the game than usually attended, or they were merely editorial attempts to find attractive women in the crowd for the male viewers' entertainment. Much of the footage came from a real game, but a close-up of the kick suggests that the director staged some elements for additional impact. The close-up also provided viewers with an opportunity to look up Wise's leg, much like the photographs. It has not been possible to trace the origins of this newsreel, but the film demonstrates that women playing football were novelties. The editor and director felt it necessary to emphasise Wise's stereotypical

[157] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', 9.
[158] Alabama Pioneers, 'The first female football player, a forgotten story from Atmore, Alabama', https://www.alabamapioneers.com/forgotten-story-young-female-football-player-atmore-alabama/ (accessed 7 February 2019).
[159] Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, 'Commanding the Room in Short Skirts: Cheering as the Embodiment of Ideal Girlhood', *Gender and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 76.

femininity to highlight her difference to the male players. Consequently, in this unknown newsreel company's discourse, Wise posed no threat to the hyper-masculine sport.

These young women's actions seem to have compelled some authority figures into preventing their participation in football, a reflection of the broader pedagogical attitudes that girls should be protected 'from the more masculine type of events and activities'.[160] The Texas Interscholastic League added rules in 1947 preventing girls from playing on high school teams in the state. The league's director, Roy Bedichek, stated that the Texas Interscholastic League committee 'believed that [Groves] was the victim of a publicity stunt' and the reason that no rule was in place previously was that they did not think a girl would want to play.[161] The district voted against including Groves' team in the league the following year, and as a result, it disbanded. The reasons for the rejection are not clear, and it may have been the decision to use a female player that underpinned the verdict. The league's rule that 'a district can vote a school into it [the league] even though that school may not have sufficient enrolment to qualify' meant that even if the school had low numbers, the league could still vote them in.[162] The *Interscholastic Leaguer* did not report on the decision and did not mention Groves at all. The September 1947 issue referred to a female kicker from Indiana in 1943, presumably Agnes Rifner, but did not make the connection to the female player in its league.[163] In Rifner's case, the *Palladium-Item and Sun Telegram* reported that the IHSAA decided to ban her, 'citing a regulation forbidding "mixed" personnel on prep athletic squads'.[164] The *Indiana High School Athletic Yearbook* for 1943 made only a

[160] Agnes Wayman, *A Modern Philosophy of Physical Education: With Special Implications for Girls and Women and for the College Freshman Program* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1938), 164.
[161] 'Twas Short Grid Career for Frankie', 5.
[162] 'Li'l Frankie Out of Football: Team Folds', 13.
[163] 'Girl Kicks Goal', *Interscholastic Leaguer*, September 1947, 4.
[164] 'I.H.S.A.A. Ruling Sends Agnes to Bench for Season', 11.

brief comment on Rifner's case. The publication simply stated that on 18 September 1943 'the Board of Control passed the following regulation: "Boys and girls shall not be permitted to participate in interschool athletic games as mixed teams, nor shall boys' teams and girls' teams participate against each other." '[165] The handbook made no mention of Rifner herself, even though this section dealt with the eligibility of individuals and usually named the players concerned. Still, the timing of September 1943 suggests that this was about Rifner. In 1957, Bill Otto, the founder of the Otto Pee Wee football league in which Dickerson played, stated that he was going to change the rules the following year to bar female players.[166] Reports did not mention what underpinned Otto's concern about female participation in football. No further articles about Dickerson playing football appear after 1957, so Otto likely implemented the rule. Unlike the others, Burnham quit football, prompted by the media reaction the previous year 'coupled with the fact that most of her teammates entered high school' and Luverne Wise graduated from her high school.[167] Therefore, not all young women were subject to bans by authority figures.

While these players' participation was short-lived, other young women in this period faced hostility from the sport's male authority figures at various levels and were never able to play. For example, in 1937 Gus Welch, football coach at American University in Washington DC and former Carlisle Indians player, intended to have a female kicker in an upcoming game. Despite approval from the student body and the opposition coach, the University's faculty vetoed the proposal.[168] Female students later abandoned their hope of playing and instead planned demonstrations, as 'it would be useless to protest

[165] Board of Control, *The Indiana High School Athletic Association: Fortieth Annual Handbook, 1943* (Indianapolis, IN: Board of Control, 1943), 143.
[166] Reckner, 'Girl in League of 300 Boys', 12.
[167] 'Esther Burnham, Female Gridder Quits Football', 10; 'Girl Quits Football', *Mount Carmel Item* (Mount Carmel, PA), 14 October 1936, 9.
[168] 'No Football for Coed', *New York Times*, 4 November 1937, 34.

faculty rejection of the scheme'.[169] It is unclear why the faculty were against the inclusion of a female kicker. Similarly, in 1941, the prospect of 17-year-old Myrtle Chick playing at the quarterback position for her high school team in Medfield, Massachusetts, provoked anger. Reports stated that she had spoken to the coach about wanting to play but 'he advised her to "stick to her knitting" '.[170] The *Daily Clintonian* stated that Chick's brother, who played on the team, as well as the other players, 'threatened to quit if Myrtle became quarterback'.[171] A *Boston Globe* article reported that the coach Jack Welch considered her one of the best players, but he believed that regretfully 'conventions dictate that he bar her from the squad'. The high school's Principal, Alton H. Hart, also thought that Chick was an outstanding player but '[i]t's not quite proper for a girl to play high school football'. Thus, educators' concerns over appropriate behaviour for women underpinned her ban. Players' opposition to Chick rested on their fears that people might see them as 'pantywaists', and therefore effeminate, for having her on the team.[172] Players and coaches articulated a definite concern that a female teammate disrupted the sport's masculinity, resulting in the coach advising Chick to return to stereotypically feminine activities. Many other young women likely tried to play on male football teams in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, but newspapers did not cover their stories.

Much of the media coverage of these young women playing alongside male teammates was positive and demonstrated that the predominantly male sport could accommodate a limited gender difference. However, when male football coaches used women in their

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[169] 'Co-Ed Kickers Abandon Hope of Grid Place', *Vidette-Messenger* (Valparaiso, IN), 8 November 1937, 6.
[170] 'Reject Girl's Offer to Join Grid Team', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 11 September 1941, 16.
[171] 'Boys Refuse Girl Place on Football Team…So She'll Start Her Own', *Daily Clintonian* (Clinton, IN), 11 September 1941, 1.
[172] 'Medfield Girl Turns Out for Football, It's No Use', *Boston Daily Globe*, 11 September 1941, 1.

teams for novelty or publicity purposes, the media's response went along with the story by trivialising and sexualising the players and stressing their differences from their male teammates. These coaches contrasted the young women to their colleagues through different, highly feminine, clothing to emphasise the novelty of these players. Some football authorities also enacted policies proscribing female participation in the sport. Banning these young women through the creation of new rules demonstrates that some football authorities were concerned about female involvement, although newspapers did not state the underpinning rationale for these restrictions. With few reasons given for these bans, it is difficult to understand authority figures' motives. With many of these young women playing on high school teams, the broader attitudes regarding women's physical education are evident. As Agnes Wayman, head of physical education at Barnard College, stated in 1938, 'the consensus of expert opinion remains on the side of safety and against the extreme types of competition'.[173] These young women not only played on highly competitive teams but in a sport that many physical educators would have considered extreme.

Conclusion

In playing against men and alongside male teammates, the young women whose stories this chapter explores arguably threatened the sport's gender order more than the women and girls who played for fun, discussed in Chapter 1. These female players were a direct threat to the sport's masculinity in one of two ways: as teams, they could beat male sides, and as individuals, they could take a man's place on the team. Yet, while their participation was relatively short-lived, in some cases because of the concern of league organisers and coaches about women playing the sport, the players mainly received a positive media response. Reports about Burnham, Groves,

[173] Wayman, *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, 165.

Dickerson, and Frecka contain little evidence that women playing on male teams were 'disruptive to the masculine narrative of football'.[174] The newspapers praised all four young women and press reports about them were free of any explicit sexual or feminine stereotypes. This form of representation undermines both stereotypes and orthodoxies around femininity and women's appropriate behaviour. These players took part in a violent sport, often in a highly physical role, on competitive teams, challenging medical and pedagogical attitudes about women's suitability for football. Arguably, it was the games in which women's and men's teams directly competed against each other that were more disruptive to the masculinity of football than those in which one female played on a male side. Yet even in the sport's earliest years, women gained some public acceptance and praise for their ability to play against male teams. Little evidence exists in the surviving reports of the male gallantry that the media reported when women played against male players, or on mixed teams in baseball.[175] Journalists did not indicate that the male opponents treated the young women differently, and the fact that one school stripped the young men of their colours indicates that educational authorities expected that the male players should have won. These case studies represent differing moral, religious, medical, and pedagogical attitudes. The contradictory responses of the clergymen in Norwalk and Chicago rested on opinions about the morality of women playing in public. The young women in Norwalk, who played only in front of friends and family, received praise, while clergymen prevented the young women from playing in public in Chicago. Similarly, reports demonstrated different beliefs concerning women playing such a highly physical sport. For example, in Chicago, Lieutenant Miller articulated his concern that women may get hurt. Despite these worries, in the 1930s and 1940s young women

[174] Oriard, *King Football*, 356.
[175] Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, 143.

such as Burnham, Groves, and Dickerson were able to play in highly physical positions on their respective teams and newspapers praised them for their hard-hitting playing style. However, the fleeting nature of these young women's participation reflected the pedagogical attitudes of physical educators that restricted women from taking part in competitive sports and masculine activities.

The examples of women's teams playing against men's contradict similar cases from other sports. The press denounced women who participated in 'socially unacceptable sports', or in an inappropriate manner, as 'curiosities and sexual misfits'.[176] Football was a socially unacceptable sport for young women to play in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, yet newspapers did not treat the majority of these young women in this manner. Newspapers' high praise is even more unusual because the young women playing against male teams frequently came from the middle and upper classes and thus were stepping outside of both gender and class norms. Evidence for the players' class comes from references to the girls in St. Louis as being from the 'principal families' and in Connecticut as being from 'prominent families'.[177] As with the examples from Chapter 1, they challenge conventional wisdom on the activities that women from these classes played, and provide rare examples of them competing against male players in team sports. These case studies contest the notion that women primarily competed in sport in a 'culture of separation'.[178]

Articles provide little evidence of Bruce's rules of media representation. Newspaper reports mostly lacked sexualisation, a focus on players' conventional femininity, or comparisons to male sport. Instead, articles frequently praised the young women,

[176] Roessner, 'The New Woman as Athlete', n.p.
[177] 'Girls Rugby Eleven Beats the Boys' Team', 10; 'Football Girls Will Play Again', 10.
[178] Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch*, 191.

emphasising their physicality and skill. On the occasions that reports did resonate with Bruce's model, mitigating factors often reduced their impact, such as the apparent praise for Burnham's football skills despite references comparing her to a male player. The reports about Wise and Rifner contrasted with those of the other young women. The articles demonstrate that some journalists and editors were concerned that female players might disrupt the notion that '[t]he football player as ideal male was not-female and not-feminine, neither a girl nor a "sissy" '.[179] Oriard further notes that between the 1920s and 1950s, 'the football hero and the beauty on the side-lines, presided over the world of football.'[180] Consequently, some coaches required these young women to dress differently to their teammates; this allowed the players to represent 'beauty' even if they were not on the sidelines. Photographs of these young women provide some evidence of Mulvey's male gaze in 'turning the represented figure itself into a fetish', yet this only really applies to images of Wise and Rifner.[181] The vast majority of reports were full of praise for these young women's efforts.

This mixed response to women playing football against men's teams in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and alongside male teammates in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, demonstrates that the media mostly believed that women could play the sport. Nevertheless, some authority figures banned young women from playing. Their concern paralleled some female physical educators' attitudes about highly physical and competitive sports for women. Modified football could represent a compromise, and from the 1930s some educationalists began promoting and formalising touch football as an acceptable version of the sport for women. These physical educators saw a novelty value in the game; they believed that this originality

[179] Oriard, *King Football*, 329.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.

could interest a wide range of students, including those who did not usually willingly participate in physical activity.

Chapter 3: Football in Education

The Vassar College shop in Poughkeepsie, New York, sells a t-shirt in both male and female sizes that has a football on it and proudly proclaims 'Undefeated Since 1861'.[1] While they are not the only college to make this claim, it still is a tongue-in-cheek reference to their lack of a football team. Their online encyclopaedia claims that touch football only began on campus in the 1960s.[2] Despite these statements, Vassar, which opened in 1861 to provide women with a full liberal arts education, has a rich history in the sport.[3] Beginning with its mock games in the 1910s through to the formalisation of touch football as an intramural sport in the 1940s, it is the Seven Sisters college with the most evidence of football in its history. Academic research echoes Vassar's lack of awareness of its footballing past, as a record of educators' use of the sport for young women is missing. Yet, students have played football, both contact and modified, on college and high school campuses since the early twentieth century.

The examples of women who played football in colleges and high schools cover the 1890s to the 1950s, decades in which women's ability to attend such establishments fluctuated. In this period, the number of women attending colleges increased. In 1870, 11,000 women attended institutes of higher education, representing 0.7% of college-aged women.[4] This number increased to 283,000 by 1920 (7.6%) and to 1,148,000 (23.0%) by 1958. The number of female students as a percentage of total students increased from 21% in 1870 to a peak in 1930 (47.3%), but the numbers dropped by

[1] Debbie Swartz, 'Fight for the Gridiron', https://vq.vassar.edu/issues/2014/01/vassar-yesterday/ (accessed 20 January 2020).
[2] Vassar Encyclopedia, 'Touch Football', http://vcencyclopedia.vassar.edu/student-organizations/athletics/touch-football.html (accessed 23 November 2018).
[3] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from their Nineteenth Century Beginnings to the 1930s* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 28.
[4] Lynn D. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

1940 and 1950 to 40.2% and 30.2% respectively.[5] As Amy Thompson McCandless notes, women gaining the vote because of '[t]he passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920 led to a demand that women be educated for their new political roles.'[6] However, the Depression's impact explains the drop in numbers after 1930 as 'women students were the first to suffer', especially as administrators denied them access to accommodation, preventing attendance by women from outside the local area.[7] In the 1940s and 1950s, the impact of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act that provided educational assistance for returning soldiers led some institutions to create admissions quotas for women.[8]

The background of the women who attended higher education institutions varied based on the type of college. At state universities, daughters of farmers, clerks, and other lower-middle-class jobs 'constituted a sizeable majority' of the female students.[9] However, those women attending the Seven Sisters colleges often came from the upper-middle class and were the daughters of professionals and businessmen; the high cost of tuition and living prohibited attendance by women from less wealthy families.[10] Higher education opportunities for African American women mainly comprised Black colleges in the South, although there was significant variation in the 'quality of education, curriculum, and institutional resource[s]' to the colleges that white women attended.[11] Some African American women who attended Seven Sisters

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth-Century American South* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1999).
[7] Amy Thompson McCandless, 'Maintaining the Spirit and Tone of Robust Manliness: The Battle Against Coeducation at Southern Colleges and Universities, 1890-1940', *NWSA Journal* 2, no. 2 (1990): 205.
[8] Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 47, 49.
[9] Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education*, 5.
[10] Ibid., 28-29.
[11] Stephanie Y. Evans, *Black Women in the Ivory Tower, 1850-194: An Intellectual History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), n.p.

colleges at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries 'were physically indistinguishable from White women', which Linda Perkins assumes meant that they could pass as White.[12] It was not until decades later that these colleges 'grudgingly, and only under great pressure', admitted African American women.[13]

The demographics of girls who attended high schools was similar to those at colleges. Most of the young women who attended high schools came from the middle and upper class, a situation that remained true until the 1930s.[14] The students who attended high schools between 1910 and 1940 sought employment in the new white-collar jobs, and the curriculum changed in response.[15] Girls attended and graduated from high school 'at higher rates than boys in the late nineteenth century and in every state from the early twentieth century to at least 1940.'[16] Understanding the backgrounds of the young women who attended these educational establishments in these years further establishes that it was those from the middle and upper classes that most frequently played female football.

A chronological examination of the development of football in education reveals physical educators' changing pedagogical attitudes. A starting point is the newspaper reports that Wellesley and Vassar students were playing football in the 1890s, stories that proved to be false. Satirical games that Vassar students organised in the 1910s as

[12] Linda Perkins, 'The African American Female Elite: The Early History of African American Women in the Seven Sister Colleges, 880-1960', *Harvard Educational Review* 67, no. 4 (1997): 720.
[13] Ibid., 718.
[14] John Rury, *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 16, 10.
[15] Claudia Goldin, 'America's Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 2 (1998): 352.
[16] Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz, 'Putting the "Co" in Education: Timing, Reasons, and Consequences of College Coeducation from 1835 to the Present', *Journal of Human Capital* 5, no. 41 (2011): 384.

a form of campus entertainment followed. These casual games give way to formal competition in contact football by some young women in high schools and colleges in the 1920s during the so-called 'golden age' for women's sport. These innovations did not last long, and from the 1930s, physical educators promoted touch football as a suitable activity for women to play on both high school and college campuses. Students at the single-sex colleges of Radcliffe and Vassar began playing casual games until physical educators increasingly formalised the sport and it became a competitive activity for female students in colleges and high schools.

Michael Oriard notes that 'concern about sissifying football was inevitably highest when American life seemed softest, in the 1920s and 1950s, not the 1930s and 1940s'.[17] However, the fact that women played contact games in the 1920s contradicts this assertion. These examples are less ad hoc than those explored in Chapter 1, but they are indicative of a decade in which physical educators had conflicting beliefs about women's physical activity. An analysis of newspaper reports of contact matches that female students played in educational establishments reveals journalists' ambivalence towards these games. Physical educators' emphasis on modified football reflected changing pedagogical attitudes towards physical activity and competition in the 1930s. They viewed touch football as a suitable version of the sport for women and girls and encouraged students to play both formally and informally as a means to inspire greater participation in sport, especially by students who had previously not been interested in physical activity. In some colleges, educators' belief in the sport's value led them to include football as a required part of physical education programmes. Educators

[17] Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 335.

embedded the game into campus life, formally acknowledging that modified football could be suitable for women.

Football is missing from the current literature on the sports that young women in high schools and colleges played. Elliott Gorn, Warren Goldstein, Jaime Schultz, and Steven Riess, amongst others, all explain that sports such as baseball, bowling, swimming, tennis, basketball, and field hockey developed in the women's colleges from the 1890s onwards.[18] Despite this strand in the recent historiography, books written in the 1920s and 1930s provide evidence of a broader range of activities taking place in educational institutions. For example, the 1930 book on the history of physical education in female colleges written by Smith College's Director of Physical Education, Dorothy Ainsworth, demonstrated that women were also playing lacrosse, water polo, volleyball, cricket, and soccer.[19] Similarly, in 1931, Miriam Wagner, an instructor in the Department of Physical Education at the University of Nebraska, identified baseball, basketball, soccer, speed ball, volleyball, hockey (presumably field hockey), and Nebraska ball as sports that women played in colleges across the country.[20] Physical educators modified football, in a similar manner to basketball, to make it suitable for young women. Pamela Grundy, Murry Nelson, Mark Dyreson, Robin Markels, Pamela Dean, and Mandy Treagus focus on Senda Berenson's and Clara Baer's modifications

[18] Elliott Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 132; Jaime Schultz, *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women's Sport* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 74; Steven Riess, *Sport in Industrial America: 1850-1920* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995), 133.
[19] Dorothy Ainsworth, *A History of Physical Education in Colleges for Women* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1930), 30.
[20] Miriam Wagner, 'Intramurals and the Women's Athletic Association', *American Physical Education Association Research Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1931): 212.

to basketball, yet contemporary and recent literature on sport in education does not mention football.[21]

‘Just Like Their Brother Collegians’: Rumours of Football in the Seven Sisters Colleges

The female-only colleges in the 1890s provided women with increasing sporting opportunities, but, despite media rumours, this did not extend to competitive football. Edward Clarke’s 1873 *Sex in Education: or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*, which declared higher education harmful to females, influenced physical educators at these colleges.[22] Clarke utilised case studies from these establishments to demonstrate the danger of higher education, including how ‘Miss D’s’ Vassar education caused her to develop amenorrhoea.[23] He also stated that one student’s death was due to ‘[b]elieving that woman can do what man can, for she held that faith, she strove with noble but ignorant bravery to compass man’s intellectual attainments in a man’s way, and died in the effort.’[24] Medical attitudes surrounding the myths of female frailty, coupled with Clarke’s belief in the dangerous effects of female higher education, meant that physical educators needed to ensure that their students could withstand the rigours of their schooling. Educators accepted the medical profession’s beliefs and used physical activity to strengthen their students and ‘improve women’s maternal function and …

[21] Pamela Grundy, Murry Nelson, and Mark Dyreson, ‘The Emergence of Basketball as an American National Pastime: From a Popular Participant Sport to a Spectacle of Nationhood’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 139; Robin Markels, ‘Bloomer Basketball and Its Suspender Suspension: Women’s Intercollegiate Competition at Ohio State, 1904-1907’, *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 1 (2000): 41; Pamela Dean, ‘“Dear Sisters” and “Hated Rivals”: Athletics and Gender at Two New South Women’s Colleges, 1893-1920’, *Journal of Sport History* 24, no. 3 (1997): 341.
[22] Patricia Vertinsky, ‘Women, Sport, and Exercise in the 19th Century’, in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. D. Margaret Costa and Sharon Guthrie (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994), 74.
[23] Edward Clarke, *Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance for the Girls*, 2nd edn (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1873), 79-82.
[24] Ibid., 104.

enhance beauty and feminine curves'.[25] With this remit, football and its associated violence would not have been a suitable sport with which to achieve these goals. Despite the medical community's concerns about highly physical activities for women, newspapers began printing rumours of students playing football at Vassar and Wellesley in the 1890s. These articles hint at journalists' unease about female football and the single-sex colleges' masculinising influence. Yet, an analysis of these claims makes it clear that these rumours were false.

In the late nineteenth century, some physical educators felt the need to protect women from the 'supposed physical and moral dangers of uncontrolled "masculine" athletic games'.[26] These concerns ultimately led to educators restricting female students from playing football. Initially, in the 1860s and 1870s, collegiate women took part in Swedish drill and callisthenics. However, with the New Woman's emergence in the late nineteenth century, sports for women gradually increased, beginning with those activities that 'promoted feminine refinement, grace, and delicacy'.[27] Despite these changes, Vassar College students formed one of the earliest female baseball teams in the country, when, in 1866, just seven years after the first male intercollegiate match between Amherst and Williams, the Laurel and Abenakis Base Ball Clubs began playing.[28] Authorities at Vassar did not publicise the creation of the baseball team, but neither did they ban the sport.[29] By 1900, collegiate women participated in at least 12

[25] Joan Hult, 'The Story of Women's Athletics: Manipulating a Dream 1890-1985', in *Women and Sport: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. D. Margaret Costa and Sharon Guthrie (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994), 85.
[26] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 23.
[27] Andrea Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 191.
[28] Debra Shattuck, 'Bats, Balls, and Books: Baseball and Higher Education for Women at Three Eastern Women's Colleges, 1866-1891', *Journal of Sport History* 19, no. 2 (1992): 91.
[29] Ibid., 98.

different activities as instructors replaced callisthenics with competitive sport.[30] Educators could avoid the issue of female frailty by adapting male games, and Berenson saw modified basketball as an alternative to football for women. She noted that basketball '[s]hould cultivate strength and physical endurance, and should be interesting enough to become a part of physical training for woman as foot ball [sic] and base ball [sic] are for men.'[31] She believed that women would never play football, and was concerned about them blindly imitating 'the athletics of men without reference to their different [physiological] organisations and purposes in life', arguing that it was essential to develop sports for women's own needs.[32]

The reports of the rumoured football games at Wellesley College mixed sensationalism with a corresponding emphasis on how the players still adhered to late-nineteenth-century social norms regarding female behaviour. Women learning the rules so that they were well-informed spectators was one way that readers could accept these women playing football, because they were, in a way, conforming to their traditional role. For example, in 1893, the *Wilkes-Barre Sunday Morning Leader* reported that students at Wellesley College were playing football. The journalist began by stating the importance of society women being able to converse intelligently on topics important to men, including football, but suggested that the Wellesley students had gone further and had 'begun kicking with a vengeance'.[33] The article referred to Lucille Hill, the college's instructor in physical culture, who had 'turned the minds of the Wellesley maidens

[30] Ainsworth, *A History of Physical Education*, 30.
[31] Senda Berenson, 'Editorial', in *Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide for Women*, ed. Senda Berenson (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1905), 7.
[32] Senda Berenson, 'The Significance of Basket Ball for Women', in *Spalding's Official Basket Ball Guide for Women*, ed. Senda Berenson (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1905), 35.
[33] 'Fencing and Football', *Wilkes-Barre Sunday Morning Leader* (Wilkes-Barre, PA), 19 November 1893, 3.

toward goals and punts and touchdowns and scrimmages'.[34] Despite these terms having clear associations with football, the author noted that the version the girls took part in was an amalgam of codes, played with a ball from the Association game between rival classes. The article reported that the players apologised for anything accidental and 'they paused and said, "Really, how very rude of me," or "Oh! I beg pardon, dear" '.[35] These comments would reassure readers that the young women were not excessively aggressive and behaved appropriately for women from the middle and upper classes. Similarly, in 1895 Diana Crossways, in the *Salt Lake Herald*, stated that '[f]air athletes now kick the Rugby at Wellesley College' as well as at other educational establishments.[36] Crossways suggested that the girls were learning the sport so that they could understand the Thanksgiving Day games better, not for competitive purposes, a theory that Washington DC's *Evening Times* echoed.[37] These reports' emphasis on a lack of violence and danger to women's health also ensured that players adhered to social norms. For example, an 1893 *Los Angeles Herald* article reported that 'all violence is eliminated from the game' and noted that 'there is no suggestion of rudeness and nothing unwomanly'. The report also stated that all girls had to pass a physical examination before participating, which could reduce readers' concerns about damage to the players' health.[38] The level of detail in these articles would possibly convince readers that these events were real. Editors either genuinely believed that physical educators were introducing football to their female students or they were creating deliberately misleading stories to sell more copies.

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Diana Crossways, 'Coaching Girls', *Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake, UT), 15 November 1895, 10.
[37] 'Girls on the Rush Line', *Evening Times* (Washington DC), 23 November 1895, 5.
[38] 'Wellesley Girls Play Football', *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 December 1893, 15.

All the evidence regarding Hill's beliefs indicates that she would not have encouraged students to play football. Hill wrote at length in an issue of Wellesley's *College News* in 1902 about the 'New Athletics' she was introducing.[39] The article listed the sports that the 350 students played, including tennis, rowing, basketball, golf, field hockey, track and field events, lacrosse, baseball, and bowling, but notably not football. Hill recognised the importance of sporting activity for female students and noted, in the introduction to *Athletics and Out-Door Sports for Women* in 1903, that the value of sport for women was 'as great — and greater — for women as for men'.[40] She included a comment from Dean of Wellesley College Russell Briggs' commencement address that '[f]iercely competitive athletics have their dangers for men; but they develop manly strength. For women their dangers are greater, and the qualities they tend to develop are not womanly.'[41] In a 1903 address to the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, Hill denounced basketball, a sport that women played extensively. She was concerned about the sport's physical effects, the associated travel for games, and playing in front of mixed audiences, as well as 'the evil influence of such excitement upon the emotional and nervous feminine nature'.[42] In the light of these public expressions of her attitudes, any inclusion of football at Wellesley on Hill's watch was highly unlikely.

It is possible that newspapers misquoted or misunderstood Hill, as they continued to propagate the rumours of football at Wellesley. The *Detroit Free Press* dedicated a third of one of its March 1896 pages to a report on Hill's motivations behind introducing the sport. The author claimed that Hill aimed to encourage the 'play instinct' in young

[39] Lucille Hill, 'The New Athletics', *College News*, 29 October 1902, 1.
[40] Lucille Hill, 'Introduction', in *Athletics and Out-Door Sports for Women*, ed. Lucille Hill (New York: Macmillan, 1903), 5.
[41] Ibid., 6.
[42] 'Basket Ball Denounced', *New York Times*, 11 October 1903, 11.

women while also developing ‘beauty, grace and elegance’ and ‘the all-round best development of the student’.[43] Hill herself stated that her use of team sports was because American college women were ‘far behind their English sisters’.[44] She justified her results by explaining that the stroke on the previous year’s rowing team was also the college’s best mathematician. Yet the report made no mention of students playing football. Hill understood the importance of physical activity for female collegiate students, but that it needed to be suitable. A *College News* article in 1902 suggested that some informal football might have taken place on the Wellesley campus before the Harvard versus Yale game, but the match was ‘just for a lark’, and the participants were not to discuss it outside of the college for fear of sensationalism.[45] This need for secrecy suggests that football was not an acceptable practice at Wellesley.

Vassar College was also subject to similarly false reports of students playing football in the 1890s. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* stated in 1895 that Vassar students were going to play the sport in their first Field Day, mentioning that students ‘will play football, jump the hurdles, run foot races, and take part in all kinds of athletic games, just like their brother collegians’.[46] Although the Vassar archives do not include the programme for the 1895 Field Day, the 1897 programme contains no reference to football in its order of events.[47] Additionally, the 1895-6 Physical Education Report did not mention football in its Field Day coverage.[48] The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* ended a November 1896 article with an anonymous poem regarding Thanksgiving games in the Seattle area.

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[43] Marion Orpen, ‘Teaching Girls to Play’, *Detroit Free Press*, 22 March 1896, 32.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Elizabeth Torrey, ‘A Word to the Wise’, *College News*, 10 December 1902, 1.
[46] ‘Vassar Girls to Race’, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 November 1895, 4.
[47] 1897 Field Day Programme, 15 May 1897, Box PE 1, Physical Education Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[48] 1895-6 Physical Education Department report, 1896, Folder 4.99, Physical Education Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

The poem was about a Vassar student who hinted to her male companion that she and her fellow students played football and that they may even beat his team one day. The male acquaintance made the female student blush when he, somewhat suggestively, commented, '[t]o get in good condition, let's have a practice game'.[49] In 1897, references to Vassar women playing football continued to appear in a range of newspapers, and the *Los Angeles Herald* published a drawing titled 'Here's the Football Heroine' (Figure 3.1).[50] The drawing portrayed a woman standing confidently with a football under her arm. The artist depicted her in sporting attire, including bloomers, with classical columns either side of her that further emphasised her heroic status. The caption stated that women continued to play football at Vassar and other colleges. The illustration appeared on a woman's page that contained articles on fashion, how to make jelly, and a retreat in the mountains for socialites. The drawing provides some evidence of Laura Mulvey's male gaze, although it is by no means explicit. While the artist presents the woman as feminine and stylish, conforming to the idealised beauty that the middle- and upper-class female readers of such a page would have understood, the use of the word 'heroine' and her holding a football makes her active rather than passive. The picture's presence on a woman's page may explain why the artist and caption writer considered her a 'heroine' and viewed her so positively. She is an aspirational figure, retaining her feminine curves, yet able to pursue a male-dominated sport.

[49] 'Topics in Sport', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (Seattle, WA), 25 November 1896, 3.
[50] 'Here's the Football Heroine', *Los Angeles Herald*, 7 November 1897, 26.

Figure 3.1: 'Here's the Football Heroine'.

It is not clear where these rumours of Vassar students playing football originated. A picture from Vassar's archives could explain some of the confusion behind these reports. An 1894 photograph showed a female student with a football under her arm (Figure 3.2).[51] She is in a strikingly similar pose to the woman in Figure 3.1 with the ball tucked under her arm as she faces the camera. However, the drawing (Figure 3.1) is

[51] Untitled picture, 1894, Folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

more glamourised than the photograph in Figure 3.2. The requirement to emphasise the woman in Figure 3.1 as conventionally beautiful is a result of the image's inclusion on a newspaper's woman's page, and for readers to view her as a heroine. Unfortunately, Vassar's archives provide no indication of who the young woman was, where this photograph originated, or whether anyone beyond their campus ever saw it.

Figure 3.2: Untitled, Vassar College, 1894.

Rumours of Vassar students' involvement in football are also evident in satirical cartoons that imply some media concern over women's increasing role in society. Charles Dana Gibson's 'The Coming Game', published in *Life* in 1895, depicted Vassar students, and this image may have convinced people that the collegiate women were playing the sport (Figure 1.3). Similarly, Grant Hamilton, a cartoonist for the weekly satirical magazine *Judge*, depicted a fictional Vassar football match in 1895 (Figure

3.3).[52] Hamilton drew the women in a variety of stereotypical roles. For example, he showed that the students' primary concern was over their appearance as they delayed the game to attend to their hair and would not want the public to see them wearing nose protectors. Hamilton also suggested that young women would distract the male umpire from being able to judge fairly. Five women crowd around the official as if to flirt with him; two young women rest their heads on his shoulders while a third tenderly touches his chest. Male players' concerns about making physical contact with women is evident in the portrayal of a Princeton player. He worried that if he pushed his fiancée during the game, she would call off their engagement. Despite the bulky trousers and sweaters that the artist depicted the women as wearing, the drawing goes some way to conforming to the era's idealised femininity, as the Vassar players all have narrow waists, accentuated busts, and long flowing hair. These stereotypes sought to ridicule the prospect of women playing such a masculine sport, and articulate male readers' concern over women's transgression into male-dominated aspects of life.

[52] Grant Hamilton, 'When Vassar Plays Football', *Judge*, 23 November 1895, n.p.

Figure 3.3: ‘When Vassar Plays Football’.

The *Los Angeles Herald*'s drawing (Figure 3.1) and *Judge*'s cartoon (Figure 3.3) stand in stark contrast to what was happening at Vassar, where not only were students not playing football, but they played few team sports at all. For example, the 1894-5 Gymnasium Report mentioned that 'in addition to the regular exercises the games of basketball and battle ball were introduced' and the department established a golf team.[53] Basketball continued to be popular the following year, and, during the 1897-8 academic year, the department introduced track and field, swimming, and fencing.[54] While Vassar students did form baseball teams in their free time, the administrators 'did not openly acknowledge that their students were playing' the sport.[55] Thus, educators at Vassar did not consider many team sports as appropriate for their students. Vassar held what academics such as Roberta Park and Ronald Smith widely recognise as the first women's Field Day in 1895.[56] The activities involved in these days were mostly individual athletics events, which stand in stark contrast to the rumours of students playing football. For example, by 1897 Vassar's Field Day included a baseball throw, basketball throw, standing and running broad jumps, 100-yard run, 120-yard hurdles, fence vault, and running high jump, but nothing related to football.[57] The inaccuracies in press reports' claims that Vassar students were playing football may also have been due to sensationalism and a desire to sell newspapers. For example, the author of a 1921 article in the *Wellesley College News* suggests that an unnamed 1902 report sensationalised an impromptu, informal game to make it appear as though Wellesley

[53] 1894-5 Gymnasium Report, 1895, Folder 4.98, Physical Education Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[54] 1897-8 Gymnasium Report, 1898, Folder 4.98, Physical Education Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[55] Shattuck, 'Bats, Balls and Books', 98.
[56] Roberta Park, 'Women as Leaders: What Women Have Attained in and through the Field of Physical Education', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 7 (2010): 1255; Ronald Smith, 'Women's Control of American College Sport: The Good of Those Who Played or an Exploitation by Those Who Controlled?' *Sports History Review* 29, no. 1 (1998): 105.
[57] 1897 Field Day Programme, 1897, Box PE 1, Physical Education Department Records, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

had a formal team.[58] Women playing football would have astonished newspaper readers at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries, and editors could have used these rumours to increase their circulation.

While students were not playing formal, competitive football on the Seven Sisters campuses, students at Vassar College appear to have been playing the game informally in the early twentieth century. For example, a series of photographs in the Vassar archives reveal the mock football games that students played. In each image the participants are wearing an H or Y, indicating that these games were burlesqued versions of the Harvard versus Yale matches. The photographs' inclusion in an archives folder without any other documentation means that no context exists. Yet the images suggest that the students were creating a fun campus event that mocked the famed contests' violence. The games allowed the young women to step outside of expected female roles temporarily. Figure 3.4 reveals that these young women parodied the predominantly male position of cheerleader.[59] Football authorities considered cheerleading as a leadership position and in 1911 *The Nation*, one of the United States' oldest weekly magazines, stated that the role 'ranks hardly second to that of having been a quarterback'.[60] Thus, the young women in Figure 3.4 were re-enacting a highly masculinised leadership position.

[58] 'Wellesley Girls Once Played Football', *Wellesley College News*, 24 November 1921, 3.
[59] Untitled photograph of mock Harvard vs Yale game, undated, Folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[60] 'Organized Cheering', *The Nation* 92, no. 2375 (1911): 5.

Figure 3.4: Harvard vs Yale Mock Football Game at Vassar College, undated.

The fact that the students were satirising football's violence is evident in Figures 3.5 and 3.6, which both appear to show the 'Harvard' and 'Yale' teams, although it is not clear if these photographs are both from 1913. The pictures showed the women wearing bulky clothing that did not emphasise their body shape; indeed, some similarities to the clothing worn by the student in Figure 3.2 are apparent. This resemblance could suggest that students held a similar event in 1894, or it could be that these were the clothes that Vassar students wore for sport. A photograph of the 1898 basketball team reveals similarly bulky sweatshirts and long skirts, but not the kinds of trousers seen in these pictures of the mock games.[61] The photographs suggest either that the version of football the students played was rough, or, more likely, that they satirised a violent game. Both Figures 3.5 and 3.6 hint at the students' feelings towards the collegiate game.[62] They include players with bandages on their

[61] Untitled photograph of the class of 1898 basketball team, 1896, Folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[62] Untitled photograph of mock Harvard vs Yale game, undated, Folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York;

heads, and at least one player in each photograph is wearing a nose guard, echoing the protective clothing that male players wore due to the sport's violence. The players, especially in Figure 3.5, stand in masculine poses as if they are about to make a tackle or are on the line of scrimmage. The young women are doing their utmost to recreate the physicality of the Harvard versus Yale matches in a burlesqued manner. Figure 3.7 is the only photograph to include any content of the game itself, although it is difficult to interpret what is happening.[63] A letter from student Edna Frantz to Rosemarie Boyle referenced a match in 1912 and provides some detail, including the obvious satirising of the sport's violent reputation. Frantz wrote: 'it was the most ridiculous thing you ever saw. The girls were in football togs. Some had their heads bandaged and court plasters on their faces. There were doctors, nurses, cheer-leaders, mascots, fellows with their girls, reporters, water-carriers etc.'[64] Both Figures 3.5 and 3.7 demonstrate that the event attracted many spectators, suggesting that the students held the game for entertainment purposes. These photographs present the young women having fun at the expense of football; the students took on traditionally male roles and highlighted the violence associated with the famous Harvard versus Yale rivalry.

Untitled photograph of mock Harvard vs Yale game, 1912, Folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[63] Untitled photograph of mock Harvard vs Yale game, 1913, folder 10.10, Photographs Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[64] Edna Frantz letter to Rosemarie Boyle, 24 November 1912, Student Letters, Digital Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

Figure 3.5: Harvard vs Yale Mock Football Game at Vassar College, undated.

Figure 3.6: Harvard vs Yale Mock Football Game, Vassar College, 1913.

Figure 3.7: Harvard vs Yale Mock Football Game, Vassar College, 1912.

Despite their apparently burlesque and satirical functions, these events appear to have been important parts of student life, as personal documents, official college sources, and external newspapers suggest. For example, student Katherine Ordaway's diary revealed that the young women were already playing these games in 1909. Her entry for 20 November stated that she 'worked in the library on hist. and English missed the football game between Yale and Harvard by the girls'.[65] To mention an event she missed suggests that this match was an occasion of some significance, although it is not clear if this game was the first event of its kind. Ordaway also mentioned the match in a 25 November 1911 entry where she stated that she 'saw part of the exciting Yale – Harvard foot ball [sic] game at 2pm'.[66] The *Daily Arkansas Gazette* reported on this 1911 event in an article titled 'Football as Played by Girls at Vassar'. The journalist noted the 'ghastly score of 20-0' in Harvard's favour in the match played on Vassar's athletic field. The article contained information about how the students played the game

[65] Katherine Ordaway Diary 1909-1910, 20 November 1909, Student Diaries, Digital Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[66] Katherine Ordaway Diary 1911-1912, 25 November 1911, Student Diaries, Digital Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.

but mostly focused on feminine stereotypes. According to the reporter, the centre lost the barrette from her hair, another player's hair 'fell down' which caused a hush in the crowd, and one player refused to play because her stockings did not match.[67] A report on the 1912 game in the *Vassar Miscellany* referred to the event as a 'well-planned burlesque game' with a crowd containing 'many dapper college youths and stylishly dressed fair maidens' and did not include the stereotypes seen in the *Daily Arkansas Gazette*.[68] The difference in the two publications' responses was because of the different authorships; one was an internal publication written by students, while the other was indicative of a college outsider who had an additional aim of reassuring readers about the event's suitability for women. Vassar's yearbook, the *Vassarion*, included the photograph of the 1913 game (Figure 3.6), suggesting that the event was a significant occasion.[69] Students played these games in 1909, 1911, 1912, and 1913 at least. These events indicate that students were already moving towards some regular playing of football on campus, even if it was informal and played solely for fun.

It is evident that the single-sex colleges were a focus for rumours about women playing football in the late nineteenth century, yet no evidence of actual competitive games exists. Physical educators such as Hill and Berenson were not interested in physically demanding sports such as football, and their beliefs contrast with media reports. Nonetheless, photographic and textual evidence shows that Vassar College students began to play the sport informally between 1909 and 1913 in burlesqued versions satirising the famous male collegiate matches. These women, attending colleges designed to educate them comparably to men, began taking part in similar sports to their male counterparts, albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner. These examples do not

[67] 'Football as Played by Girls at Vassar', *Daily Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, AR), 30 November 1911, 8.
[68] 'Harvard – Yale Football Game', *Vassar Miscellany*, 1 January 1912, 256.
[69] 'Untitled page', *The Vassarion 1913*, n.p.

confirm the media rumours, as they came too late, but they do contradict Vassar's current claims about football on campus. Newspapers clearly viewed the idea of women playing football as sensational and original and the Vassar students capitalised on the novelty of women playing football to satirise the sport. Only a few years after these burlesqued games, some women in educational settings turned this originality into competitive teams.

A Game for the 'More Daring Students': The Debate About Contact Football in Education

In 1921 in Twin Falls, Idaho, girls at a local high school attempted to form a competitive contact football team after being inspired by playing in a burlesqued game at an athletic carnival. This example epitomises some of the issues young women in schools and colleges faced when they attempted to play contact football. The *Bisbee Daily Review* stated that the players had 'fallen hard [for the sport] … and next season plan to put a girls' team on the field'.[70] Polly Thomas, the team's organiser and a senior at the school, argued that the boys' team had had a good season the year before, so '[w]hy shouldn't girls come in for some of it?' The *Review*'s reporter was not concerned over the proposal but did make a brief comment about the players' appearances: 'While the girls were picked for ability, everyone is good-looking.'[71] Accompanying the article was a photograph (Figure 3.8) of some of the girls wearing a uniform of long-sleeved striped sweatshirts, lined up, and crouching on the ground as if in football stances. The players were all wearing helmets suggesting that this match was a contact game. One player was smiling at the camera with a ball under her arm. The image did not sexualise the players at all. The girls' smiling faces suggest they were enjoying playing football; it could also be the photographer's attempt to trivialise the game and emphasise that it

[70] 'Girls' Football Team? Sure! It's In Idaho', *Bisbee Daily Review* (Bisbee, AZ), 10 April 1921, 3.
[71] Ibid.

was not a serious event. A further article in the *East Oregonian* explained that the players intended to train during the summer, ready for the football season.[72] While little evidence exists to indicate if this plan succeeded, the school seemingly accepted the idea since no reports included any information to the contrary. School leaders had also presumably allowed the newspaper's photographers onto the school premises to take the pictures. That some educators supported young women playing football reveals a change in pedagogical attitudes away from earlier concerns of protecting women from physical sports. This example suggests that some educators encouraged women to play football but that the press still needed to emphasise to readers that the players were attractive. The report's emphasis on the girls' looks, coupled with a lack of any evidence that this particular plan in Twin Falls amounted to anything, suggests that some newspapers and educators debated the sport's suitability for young women. Reports of other female football teams in educational establishments in the 1920s also demonstrate this ambivalence.

[72] 'Started in Fun', *East Oregonian* (Pendleton, OR), 25 March 1921, 3.

Figure 3.8: 'Girl's Football Team ? Sure! It's In Idaho'.

Physical education in the 1920s reflected educators' differing views regarding suitable sporting opportunities for young women. The decade was a golden age for female involvement in sport in the United States, but this did not necessarily extend to physical education.[73] As Robert Pruter notes, while there was an 'explosion of women athletes who attained national distinction in the Olympics and in national highly competitive contests', female physical educators exerted 'tremendous pressure … to limit competitive activities for girls'.[74] Similarly, Judith Jenkins George observes that although 'the 1920s flappers sought new identifications for their adventurous spirit, there still existed an accepted social decorum for what was deemed appropriate for

[73] Gerald Gems, Linda Borish, and Gertrud Pfister, *Sports in American History: From Colonisation to Globalisation* (Chicago: Human Kinetics, 2008), 248.
[74] Robert Pruter, *The Rise of the American High School and the Search for Control, 1880-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 244-5.

sportswomen'.[75] Women in the 1920s pursued 'leaner, more "boyish" figures' and turned to sport and exercise to achieve this ideal.[76] As Susan Cahn comments, 'the best-known modern athletes typically came from white, well-to-do families and competed in sports that were considered acceptably feminine'.[77] Therefore, while changing social attitudes, including the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1919, gave women more freedom than they had previously experienced, sport did not always reflect these changes. For example, female physical educators formed the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation in 1923 with the aims of removing commercialism, competition, and the 'exclusivity that characterised intercollegiate activities for men' from physical education for young women.[78] Many physical educators believed that activities for women should promote 'sportsmanship, loyalty, citizenship, initiative and good conduct', and that interscholastic competition could not achieve these aims.[79] However, some sports, such as basketball, saw an increase in competitive activity as 'the Amateur Athletic Union began to organise a national infrastructure for the women's game', and Pasadena, California, hosted the first national women's basketball championship in 1926.[80] Physical educators thus held conflicting opinions about what activities were proper for women in the 1920s, and the examples of women playing contact football represented this ambivalence.

A college football coach's comment demonstrates that not all football authority figures were concerned that women playing contact football would, to use Oriard's word,

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[75] Judith Jenkins George, 'Women's Riflery Teams: A Collegiate Anomaly of the Post World War I Period', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 23, no. 1 (1992): 33.
[76] Dave Kaszuba, 'Bringing Women to the Sports Pages: Margaret Goss and the 1920s', *American Journalism* 23, no. 2 (2006): 17.
[77] Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 51.
[78] Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present*, 147.
[79] Pruter, *The Rise of the American High School*, 248.
[80] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 38-9, 54.

'sissify' the sport. In January 1921, Major Frank Cavanaugh, Boston College's football coach, suggested that women could be playing varsity football in a few years. He indicated that during the war 'women have shown they could fight' and he expected 'agitation' from the women's colleges for varsity football.[81] Cavanaugh linked this observation on sport to shifting social conditions and that these changes meant that coaches and educators should allow women to play football. The fact that Cavanaugh 'expect[ed]' agitation also suggests that he believed women wanted to play the sport. Similarly, in the same month, both Vassar's and Wellesley's newspapers printed an extract from a *New York Sun* article, wherein the journalist had asked '[w]hy should American women not play football?' The piece referred to the fact that women's rugby teams from Great Britain and France had recently played an international match as evidence that women could withstand the sport's rigours. The reporter suggested that some football rules needed changing to make it a game of 'skill and brains' rather than strength.[82] The journalist did not believe that there would be Yale versus Vassar fixtures but that 'Bryn Mawr–Smith contests are well within the range of possibility'.[83] These comments suggest that women in educational institutions could be capable of playing football, but that to make the sport wholly suitable, some amendments would be necessary. It is not clear why the student magazines included this extract, as neither had any accompanying comment. What is clear is the fact that some individuals believed that women had demonstrated that they were physical enough to play football and should be able to compete against other women.

Despite at least one male football coach supporting women playing football, other commentators were concerned about female collegiate students taking up the sport.

[81] 'Women to Play Football in Future', *El Paso Herald* (El Paso, TX), 8 January 1921, 10.
[82] 'Feminine Football', *Wellesley College News*, 2 February 1921, 2.
[83] 'Feminine Football', *Vassar Miscellany News*, 22 January 1921, 1.

One was Donald Rose, a regular contributor to *The North American Review* with his 'Stuff and Nonsense' column, who stated that he did not 'think much of football for girls'.[84] He imagined a future where Vassar would play Wellesley in the 'Helen-of-Troy Stadium' in front of 82,000 fans with teams 'consisting principally of blondes'. His report on this imagined game ended with a list of the officials, consisting of 'Referee, Smith of Palmolive; Umpire Douglas of Holeproof … Powder by Coty, lipstick by Kissproof and vanity cases by Woolworth'. These imagined officials emphasised orthodox stereotypes about women and their use of cosmetics.[85] Comments about the participants' hair colour and the mention of Helen of Troy emphasise the fictional players' beauty, while the references to makeup highlight Rose's beliefs about what women's real focus should be. The author made a determined effort through satire and ridicule to demonstrate that football was inappropriate for collegiate women. His treatment of the story resembled his 'Stuff and Nonsense' section of the *Review* which was a humorous look at recent events. These contrasting articles demonstrate the conflicting beliefs about women playing football that were prevalent in the decade.

Two case studies of female contact football teams in educational establishments in the 1920s demonstrate educators' contradictory beliefs about highly physical sport for women. For example, newspapers reported on a 1922 game at the George Peabody College for teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, between the 'Vikings' and the 'Danes'. Five articles, which mostly utilised the same source material, referred to the college's 'more daring students' taking part and a 7-0 victory for the Vikings.[86] The fact that the

[84] Donald Rose, 'The Feminine Touch', *The North American Review* 228, no. 6 (1929): 766.
[85] Ibid.
[86] 'Sensational Plays Feature Football Game of "Vikings"', *Bismarck Tribune* (Bismarck, ND), 1 November 1922, 6; 'Peabody Girls Stage Fierce Football Struggle', *Topeka Daily State Journal* (Topeka, KS), 1 November 1922, 5; 'Hair-Raising Game Results When Girls Clash on Gridiron', *New York Times*, 2 November 1922, 23; 'Girl Football Players in an Exciting Game', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 November 1922, 23; 'Nashville Girls Play Football', *Free Trader Journal and Ottawa Fair Dealer* (Ottawa, IL), 3 November 1922, 6.

reporter for the *Topeka Daily State Journal* considered the students 'daring' suggests that the sport required bravery and was potentially dangerous for the players.[87] Similarly, newspapers extensively covered a girls' high school football team in Cavour, South Dakota. In September 1926 the *Daily Argus-Leader* referred to Cavour as a place where 'the men are only men and the women are the football players' due to what the author called 'the smallest and lightest group of male football talent in years'.[88] In this comment, the women are physically pioneering, a reflection of the earlier remarks regarding women's role during the war and their ability to play international rugby. The article reported that Cavour High School had organised two female football teams to play preliminaries to the boys' six football matches.

Articles about these games reveal newspapers' positive response to these young women. For example, the reports on the Peabody College game primarily focused on how the players scored the sole touchdown, employing a journalistic style that was typical of how newspapers treated male matches of the era. Four of the five articles mentioned minor modifications to the game; these changes included a reduction in pitch size and the use of a round ball, but all other standard rules applied, which presumably included tackling. Articles also stated that the games were due to be a weekly occurrence, suggesting that the school was unconcerned about them.[89] All but one of the reports appeared on sports pages, implying that the editors considered the matches as sport, not entertainment. This positioning was also true for the Cavour game, with only one of the reports included on a woman's page and one on a front page. Reporters were similarly positive about the young women in Cavour. For

[87] 'Peabody Girls', 5.
[88] 'Cavour Girls Play Football To Draw Fans to Boys Tilts', *Daily Argus-Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD), 30 September 1926, 8.
[89] 'Peabody Girls', 5; 'Hair-Raising Game', 23; 'Girl Football Players', 23; 'Nashville Girls Play Football', 6.

example, the *De Kalb Daily Chronicle*'s report the day after their first game stated that despite its rough nature, the girls were still enthusiastic and 'exhibited surprising ability'. The article reported that fumbles were rare, and it included particular praise for Marjorie Gilchrist who 'looked like a real football player', although this double-edged compliment does insinuate that the others did not.[90] The *Daily Dispatch* called Gilchrist 'the star' of the 0-0 game between the Alpha and Beta teams, and the headline 'Girls Shine on Football Field' praised all concerned.[91] The *Cedar Rapids Republican* suggested that the match, which was clearly a contact game, was highly physical when it referred to the 'numerous scratched faces, black eyes, scraped shins, and bruised bodies' that were the result.[92]

However, while some reporters were ready to praise the women playing in these matches, others were more ambivalent and qualified their praise with ridicule. Such ambivalence suggests that there was a debate within the press about football's suitability for young women in educational settings. For example, the *Indianapolis Sunday Star* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer* called the Cavour team a 'novelty', but also referred to Marjorie Gilchrist as a female 'Red' Grange.[93] To compare Gilchrist to the player famed for his 'ghostlike speed and elusiveness' is high praise.[94] Renowned sportswriter Grantland Rice described Grange's attributes in a 1934 article in the *Daily Courier*. Rice wrote that Grange 'had a way of picking his openings, timing his charges'

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[90] 'Girls Play at Football Now Out in Dakota', *De Kalb Daily Chronicle* (De Kalb, IL), 2 October 1926, 6.
[91] 'Girls Shine on Football Field', *Moline Daily Dispatch* (Moline, IL), 2 October 1926, 18.
[92] 'Thirty Girls Play Football; Like It', *Cedar Rapids Republican* (Cedar Rapids, IA), 3 October 1926, 7.
[93] 'South Dakota Has Girls' Gridiron Team', *Indianapolis Sunday Star* (Indianapolis, IN), 10 October 1926, 38; 'Girls' Team Has Female "Red" Grange', *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, OH), 24 October 1926, n.p.
[94] Pro Football Hall of Fame, 'Harold Grange – Biography', http://www.profootballhof.com/players/harold-red-grange/biography/ (accessed 23 February 2018).

and was ‘one of the fastest men in a football suit’. Rice also emphasised how Grange had ‘one of the quickest competitive minds I’ve ever known’ and he ‘was a football genius’.[95] These descriptions emphasise how well Gilchrist played. However, as Toni Bruce notes, a press comparison between women’s sport and men’s is not necessarily always a compliment: it ‘reinforces the superiority of male athletes and reifies men’s sport as the norm against which women’s sport is judged’.[96] The low numbers of female football players limited the journalists’ options of whom to compare Gilchrist to, meaning that the comment may not have been an attempt to portray the male game as superior.

Bruce’s rule of non-sport-related aspects, where the media emphasises other areas of sportswomen’s lives such as their appearances and personal lives, is also evident in some reports, confirming that this media coverage was not a straightforward acceptance of women playing football. For example, the *Cedar Rapids Republican* juxtaposed players’ physicality with some feminine stereotypes. The reporter noted that the players were ‘seeking their beauty in butcher shops instead of beauty parlors’ because an unnamed source told them that raw beef was ‘good to take the coloring out of bruises’.[97] In stating this, the author suggested that the girls’ primary concern was their appearances. These juxtapositions between the team’s skilful play and players’ concerns over their looks perfectly illustrate Bruce’s rule of ambivalence, although these types of comments were in the minority.

The photographs (Figures 3.9 and 3.10) that newspapers included in reports of the George Peabody College game also demonstrate their ambivalence about the players’

[95] Grantland Rice, ‘The Sportlight’, *Daily Courier* (Connellsville, PA), 26 December 1934, 8.
[96] Toni Bruce, ‘New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave’, *Sex Roles* 74, no. 7-8 (2016): 365.
[97] ‘Thirty Girls Play Football’, 7.

activities. The *New York Tribune*'s picture (Figure 3.9) hinted at other modifications to the sport, as the photographer showed the players during a match without helmets, attire typical in the men's game by this point.[98] This picture could indicate that the game was not a full-contact version of the sport, but could also be the result of allowing readers to see the young women's faces and hair. The editor included the photograph on a double page of captioned pictures of various news stories. This page encompassed other chronicles of female achievement, including photographs of female dancers in San Francisco, a women's horse race at a hunting meeting, and the Prince of Wales meeting the female winners of various events at an open-air multi-sports festival in London. Other pictures on the page included a new ship in the United States Navy and a former professor from Columbia University who was in Tokyo as a 'civic aid'. Thus, the editor reported the women's game alongside national and international events. It was, in their eyes, either particularly newsworthy or a novelty. Either way, the editor was assuming that readers were likely to be interested in pictures of girls playing football. The *Great Falls Tribune* included a staged photograph picturing the teams on the line of scrimmage and looking at the camera (Figure 3.10).[99] The caption emphasised the players' looks and stated that the team had claimed the 'championship of the universe for their sex' followed by '[c]an you, viewing their line-up, deny it?' This emphasis on the players' beauty rather than their ability is indicative of Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects where other elements of women's lives, such as their appearances, are emphasised over their sporting achievement. The editor's inclusion of this comment illustrates their belief that the mostly male readers needed reassurance that the women still conformed to their ideas of feminine attractiveness.

[98] 'Girls Play Real Football', *New York Tribune*, 19 November 1922, 3.
[99] 'Can You Imagine This', *Great Falls Tribune* (Great Falls, MT), 22 November 1922, 10.

Figure 3.9: ‘Girls Play Real Football’.

Figure 3.10: ‘Can You Imagine This?’

There was a similarly ambivalent response about the female team in Cavour, South Dakota. For example, a picture of the team in the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* and the *Daily Argus-Leader* showed them in a traditional line-up, wearing helmets, padded trousers, and long jersey tops.[100] The *Pittsburgh Post*’s editor included the photograph at the top

[100] ‘Husky Dakota Girls Play Football’, *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, 7 October 1926, 16; ‘What Ho! ‘Tis Ye Feminine Team of Pigskin Artists at Cavour’, *Daily Argus Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD), 7 October 1926, 4.

of the middle columns on a sports page, while the *Daily Argus-Leader*'s editor included the picture on a local news page. Thus, the *Post*'s editor viewed the event as sports news and of interest to that page's readers. The *Indianapolis Sunday Star* sports pages contained a slightly different team photograph, again showing the players in their uniform, including helmets.[101] The pictures did not overtly sexualise any of the players and the editors' decisions to place them on sports pages suggests that they believed the match was a genuine sporting event. The photographer's images of gameplay also indicated a similar lack of concern. The pictures show physically active players dressed appropriately for a game of contact football. The *Minneapolis Star* included two photographs of some of the players in action. One picture showed the team on opposing lines of scrimmage in their uniform, including padded trousers and helmets. The second photograph showed player Eula Barton side-on, in full uniform, with what the caption referred to as 'a wicked boot' as she kicked the ball.[102] The article was the largest one on a page that predominantly carried news stories related to the United States, including a murder case and a young boy's disappearance. Therefore, the editor considered it important, perhaps because of its novelty. While images were significant elements in reports of women's games, the photographs in no way detracted from the game's physicality, although accompanying captions demonstrated Bruce's rule of ambivalence. For example, the *Daily Argus-Leader* invited readers to view the photograph of the team line-up for evidence of the 'formidable but pulchritudinous' players.[103]

Whole-page spreads in newspapers also demonstrate newspaper editors' conflict between acceptance of young women in education playing football and a need to

[101] 'South Dakota Has Girls' Gridiron Team', *Indianapolis Sunday Star*, 10 October 1926, 38.
[102] 'What? Battling Betas vs. Adamant Alphas! It's True; Schoolgirls Now Playing Football', *Minneapolis Star* (Minneapolis, MN), 9 October 1926, 3.
[103] 'What Ho!', 4.

emphasise players' orthodox femininity. For example, a *Des Moines Sunday Register Magazine* feature on the Cavour team included the same *Pittsburgh Post* and *Daily Argus-Leader* photograph. The magazine also had pictures of Kent McCord of Tampa and Gladys Scherer of Upsala College as examples of the increasing number of women playing contact football in educational settings.[104] The photograph of McCord depicted her kicking, while the picture of Scherer was a close-up of her head with her helmet on; neither representation sexualised the young women. In contrast, a small photograph at the top of the page was a posed picture of one player pulling the hair of another to tackle her. Furthermore, a cartoon on the same page showed a female player fixing her makeup on the pitch as a ball hurtled towards her. The artist depicted the player in high heels with a narrow waist and fashionable hair. In this case, the editor included the images to present the women in a sexualised manner and displaying stereotypical characteristics as a means to reassure the readers that the female students remained feminine. This cartoon echoes Jan Wright and Gill Clarke's findings in rugby union that the media develops this kind of discourse to demonstrate that the women are 'no threat to the masculinity of male rugby players'.[105] The drawing also provides evidence of Mulvey's belief that a way of deflecting male anxiety is through ensuring that 'the woman's body has to be controlled and inserted into the social order'.[106] The artist makes the woman in the cartoon socially acceptable by depicting her as conforming to idealised body shapes for women despite the sport she is playing. Half of the page dedicated to this story comprised the photographs and cartoon; this positioning provides further evidence that images were important

[104] Ted Hansey, 'South Dakota Girls Take to Football', *Des Moines Sunday Register* (Des Moines, IA), 31 October 1926, 5.
[105] Jan Wright and Gill Clarke, 'Sport, the Media and the Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality: A Case Study of Women's Rugby Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 3 (1999): 231.
[106] Anneke Smelik, 'Lara Croft, Kill Bill, and the Battle for Theory in Feminist Film Studies', in *Doing Gender in Media, Art, and Culture*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris Van Der Tuin (London: Routledge, 2007), 181.

elements of reports of women's football in high schools and colleges. The *Indianapolis Star* included the same photograph of McCord, but the caption stated that 'hair pulling and eye scratching are not permitted' in the games.[107] The *Olean Evening Herald* also mentioned McCord and her team and asked, 'Should girls play football?' The author claimed '[e]ven the young women can become rough in their participation in strenuous sport' and reiterated that organisers banned hair pulling.[108] Newspapers occasionally employed stereotypes and highlighted players' attractiveness when reporting on these contact games, demonstrating their ambivalence towards these events.

The ambivalence that the media demonstrated towards these games epitomised physical educators' differing attitudes towards competitive matches for the Cavour girls. Media reports suggest that the team's organisers used the players as a form of novelty. For example, the *Minneapolis Star* stated that 'the football girls will be featured at various Homecoming games at educational institutions in the northwest'.[109] Newspaper reports demonstrate that the girls did play matches as a precursor to male games. For example, a *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* article mentioned that the girls were to be 'one of the main features' before a Northern Normal versus Valley City football game in late October.[110] The timing of the games before men's matches suggests the events were novelties, and that the female games were peripheral to the real activity of male players. A *Minneapolis Star* article reported on the 0-0 game the young women played before the boys' match against Lake Preston, and it stated that they played a second game before the Wessington match.[111] Although the *Minneapolis Star* did not report a

[107] 'Girl Heads Football Eleven', *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis, IN), 1 November 1924, 13.
[108] 'Should Girls Play Football?', *Olean Evening Herald* (Olean, NY), 4 November 1924, 6.
[109] 'What? Battling Betas', 3.
[110] 'Cavour Girls to Feature Grid Game at Aberdeen', *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), 27 October 1926, 16.
[111] 'What? Battling Betas', 3.

result, the *Sioux City Journal* noted that this second game was also a 0-0 tie.[112] The superintendent of schools in Cavour wanted the girls to play a game before the conference match between the Augustana "Vikings" and the Dakota Wesleyan "Tigers". However, Dakota Wesleyan authorities vetoed the plan.[113] A *Daily Argus Leader* article indicated that Dakota Wesleyan was concerned about girls taking part in interscholastic competition. Cavour authorities disagreed that the game was interscholastic since it was between teams from the same school.[114] The report further explained that the girls were enjoying playing and had their parents' approval, and the sport was 'no rougher than girls [sic] basketball'.[115] A report in the *Joplin Globe* explained that 'two preliminaries to college games which were scheduled on successive Saturdays were called off because of opposition to interscholastic endeavor by girls'.[116] The author pointed to similar opposition to Iowa's annual high school basketball tournament and provided the example of Wisconsin high schools that barred all activities that pitted girls from one school against girls from another, including music and debate contests. The report also explained that Indiana high school authorities prohibited interscholastic competition for girls. Educators' primary concern was about the type of game that the girls played, rather than the sport. They believed that intense competition 'would inevitably lead them to exceed recommended restraints on physical exertion' and thus endanger their health.[117] Restrictions on these young women's participation in football were not because of authority figures' concern about what some contemporary

[112] 'Wessington, 13; Cavour, 0', *Sioux City Journal* (Sioux City, IA), 9 October 1926, 19.
[113] 'Dakota Wesleyan Bars Cavour Girl Gridsters', *Lead Daily Call* (Lead, SD), 26 October 1926, 1.
[114] 'Cavour Explains Stand on Girl Grid Contests', *Daily Argus Leader* (Sioux Falls, SD), 2 November 1926, 15.
[115] Ibid.
[116] 'Girls' Games Called Off', *Joplin Globe* (Joplin, MO), 16 November 1926, 9.
[117] Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 62.

commentators had called ‘sissifying’ football, but because of anxieties around any female interscholastic competition.

The 1920s saw many conflicts in and around women’s sport. Physical education did not reflect the apparent golden age that many other sports enjoyed, and the anti-competition movement restricted some young women’s sporting opportunities. Educators restricted interscholastic competition in some regions, but it flourished in other states with sports such as basketball. Reports about the full-contact football games for young women in educational establishments in this decade demonstrated the same ambivalence that characterised sporting activity for all women. In all cases, newspapers praised the players for their skills, but articles also occasionally resonated with Bruce’s rule of non-sport-related aspects by focusing on their appearances. Even though none of the games in South Dakota or Tennessee were interscholastic, these innovations did not survive for very long. While these case studies are the most formal examples of women playing football in educational settings, changing social conditions and pedagogical attitudes limited their longevity.

‘Hardly More Tiring than Basketball’: Touch Football for Women

The media and authority figures’ response to contact football for young women in high schools in the 1920s was mixed; however, physical educators in the 1930s accepted touch football, a modified version of the sport, for their students. As early as 1914, some commentators considered touch football suitable for young women. In that year, the children’s magazine *The Youth’s Companion* included an article on tag football. The author mentioned that the sport would appeal to boys too young to play full-contact football and to those ‘who have been forbidden to play because of physical incapacity’. In addition, they noted that ‘[w]ith some adaptations it has also been played

successfully by girls'.[118] The sport was still a novel one for women to play, yet was not as physically demanding as contact football. Modified football began as a casual game organised predominantly by students, but as the years progressed, educators increasingly formalised the sport until it was, in at least one case, a requirement of physical education classes. These examples fill a gap in academic research where researchers have overlooked physical educators' use of football and demonstrate that these teachers believed that the sport was suitable for their female students.

Physical education departments' increasingly formal use of touch football coincided with the sport's development and the growing importance of intramural activities. For example, in 1932, physical educators from the Northeast formed the Touch Football Association of America. The Association's board included the Director of Physical Education for the state of Connecticut, Charles Prohaska, and two high school physical educators from New York, H. Leigh McCurdy from Gorton High School and Edward Storey from Mamaroneck High School.[119] They planned to 'adjust the rules of the game … [for] boys and girls, standardize them, and promote the game for safety's sake in physical education programs'.[120] Seven years later, Emmet Maum in the *Ogden Standard-Examiner* credited Stephen Epler, a high school football coach from Iowa, and the author of *Six-Man Football: The Streamlined Game*, with the creation of football for women.[121] The sport's suitability for females was evident in Epler's comment that the activity is 'hardly more tiring than basketball'.[122] The book mostly focused on the rules of the male game but contained four pages dedicated to guidelines for women's football. Epler was clear that girls who wanted to play football

[118] 'Tag Football', *The Youth's Companion*, 3 September 1914, 460.
[119] 'Touch Football Being Organised', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 27 May 1932, 4.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Emmet Maum, 'Girls Are Now Eagerly Playing Their Own Brand of Football', *Ogden Standard-Examiner* (Ogden, UT), 29 October 1939, 31.
[122] Ibid.

should be able to, and his book included a written request from a female student at a Kansas high school who asked him to send her physical education teacher a copy of the rules.[123] In the 1930s, intramural sport was thus emerging at a time when some educators believed young women could play modified football. These physical educators believed that intramural sport had a significant benefit over play days and sports days as the students remained on campus, and only the young women of that college took part, limiting both travel and the possibility of spectators.[124] Contemporary articles written by female physical educators explained the importance of this type of competition. For example, in 1927, Pauline Hodgson, a physical educator at the University of Michigan, declared that appealing to the '*group* feeling and loyalty of those already held together by other interests' was a means of gaining mass participation in sport.[125] Similarly, in 1931, Miriam Wagner, an instructor in the Department of Physical Education at the University of Nebraska, stated that intramural activities helped 'girls to establish habits of physical recreation, and … [gave] them opportunities of becoming acquainted with girls other than those in their sororities, classes, or dormitories'.[126] These events were, therefore, an important means of increasing participation, while also ensuring greater socialisation across the college.

While modified football became a more appropriate version of the sport for young women to play rather than the contact game, early informal games appear to have concerned Radcliffe College staff. For example, in 1938, a *Boston Sunday Herald* photographer captured a series of images of students playing touch football (Figures

[123] Stephen Epler, *Six-Man Football, The Streamlined Game* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), 214.
[124] Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 15.
[125] Pauline Hodgson, 'The Development of Intramural Athletics for College Women', *American Physical Education Review* 32, no. 7 (1927): 492. Emphasis in original.
[126] Wagner, 'Intramurals and the Women's Athletic Association', 207.

3.11, 3.12, and 3.13).[127] The reverse of each photograph contained the instruction 'Do Not Use', although it is unclear whether this was the college's or the newspaper's stipulation. An article from Radcliffe's archives suggests that the publication did include the images. The report mentioned:

> On fine fall afternoons the perennial tag-football makes its appearance. Radcliffe swans and their Harvard swains are to be seen gamboling upon the green. This daintier type of football is not officially entered in the sports curriculum, but it occasions notice and this year even rated photographs in the rotogravure section of the Sunday papers.[128]

That a Sunday newspaper included photographs of a casual game of touch football suggests this was still an unusual event despite its regularity. The comment that the game was not a recognised sport at the college, coupled with the notes on the reverse of the photographs, suggests that in 1938, Radcliffe's physical educators did not believe that the game was suitable for their students. Female athletic leaders in these years created different rules for girls and reduced competition, which they viewed as a masculine quality.[129] The Radcliffe students who, as the photographs evidence, played alongside or against male players contradicted these beliefs, even if it was modified football.

The pictures suggest that these games were informal but also that the photographer did not feel the need to emphasise the young women's conventional attractiveness. Figures 3.11 and 3.12 reveal that the game was coeducational, although it is difficult to assess whether it was males versus females or two mixed teams. Players appear to

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[127] Touch Football Photographs, Fall 1938, TC 273, Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
[128] Untitled article, 1939, SC 118, Kristin Powell Papers, Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
[129] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 119.

have worn differing kinds of attire, indicating that the game was informal. For example, some players wore sports clothing, such as the male in Figure 3.12 and, to some extent, the female in the foreground in Figure 3.11. Others wore casual clothing, including the female in the background of Figure 3.11 who wore a skirt and blouse. Figure 3.12 depicts the female player in an athletic pose. Students appear to have played the game outside university buildings, but it is difficult to see if the college marked out a pitch which would have demonstrated authority figures' acceptance of the game. These images provide little evidence of Mulvey's male gaze: as Roberta Sassatelli notes, in gaze theory 'the male hero acts' and the women are simply seen.[130] The young women in these photographs are not passive: they are physically assertive and active. In addition, the photographer does not eroticise the players in any way; the pictures simply show athletic young women playing touch football.

[130] Roberta Sassatelli, 'Interview with Laura Mulvey: Gender, Gaze and Technology in Film Culture', *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 5 (2011): 124.

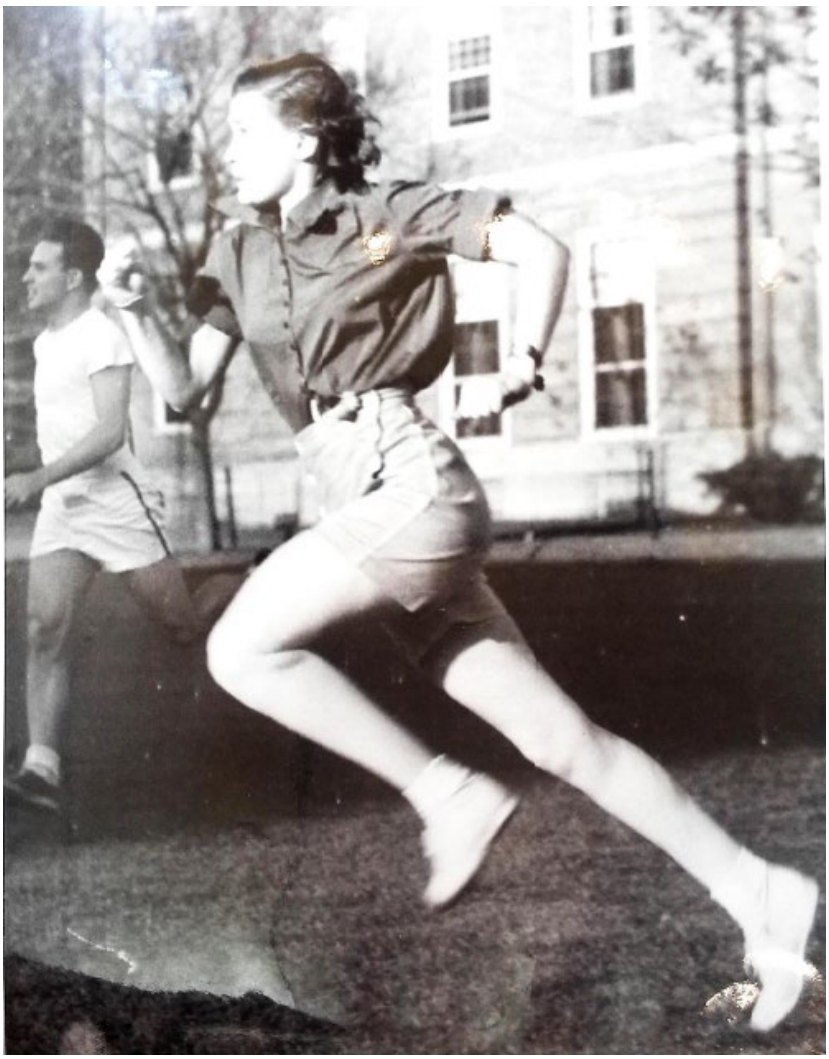

Figure 3.11: Touch Football at Radcliffe College, 1938.

Figure 3.12: Touch Football at Radcliffe College, 1938.

Figure 3.13: Touch Football at Radcliffe College, 1938.

While touch football at Radcliffe College began informally, the Physical Education Department made the sport official during World War II. The staff saw the activity as a wartime replacement for male football when fewer players were present on the Harvard campus. The department 'expressed a desire that the girls be taught to take men's places on the field as well as in the factory' and the plan was that an '[a]ll-girls team will meet Cornell, Dartmouth, Army, Navy, Brown, Princeton, and Yale' the following autumn.[131] Consequently, in 1942, the Athletic Association Council, an organisation set up by the college's authorities 'to promote an interest in gymnastics and athletic sports' at the college, voted to include touch football as one of its activities.[132] The committee consisted of 'the officers of the Association, the Physical Director, and a representative

[131] 'Untitled', *The Radcliffe News*, 6 February 1942, 5.
[132] Athletic Association Constitution, undated, RGXV, Box 1 Folder 5, Athletic Association Records 1901-1907. Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

from each of the three lower classes'.[133] The sport was thus predominantly student-led but had some input from faculty. The Association also aimed to increase participation levels for female students by setting up touch football, and it considered holding the sport after the field hockey season had finished, or on evenings.[134] The activity was a success and continued after the war: students were still playing touch football in 1946, as the *Radcliffe News* mentioned a game against Dunster House (one of Harvard's dormitories) on a damp November day.[135] A 1958 *Radcliffe News* report referred to the college's football games as one of their 'less publicized and more rugged traditions', indicating that the matches continued long after the war had ended.[136] The use of the word 'tradition' suggests that students had been playing football for long enough for it to have become an integral part of college life.

Despite Radcliffe's introduction of touch football for their students, it was at Vassar College where both the Department of Physical Education and the Athletic Association further formalised the playing of touch football. Students formed Vassar's Athletic Association in 1895 to manage their Field Day and basketball competitions, and the Association worked alongside the Department of Physical Education to provide supervision for competitive athletics.[137] For example, in 1938, the Athletic Association Report stated that in close cooperation with the Department of Physical Education, they

[133] Athletic Association Constitution, undated, RGXV, Box 1 Folder 5, Athletic Association Records 1901-1907, Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
[134] Athletic Association Minutes, 4 November 1942, RG XV, Athletic Association Records, Radcliffe College Archives, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
[135] 'Radcliffe Football Varsity Bows to Dunster Squad In 30-12 Upset', *The Radcliffe News*, 8 November 1946, 1.
[136] 'Radcliffe Aims at Living Tradition To Give Unity, Purpose to College', *The Radcliffe News*, 15 September 1958, 2.
[137] Dorothy Ainsworth, *The History of Physical Education in Colleges for Women* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1930), 83.

had ‘worked to include as many students as possible in organised athletics’.[138] Despite the seemingly informal nature of some of the Vassar examples, the close working relationship between the Association and the Department of Physical Education suggests that both groups valued modified football.

As at Radcliffe, Vassar students began playing the sport informally in the late 1930s, and authority figures even viewed modified football as an appropriate game to play against men. For example, a *Vassar Miscellany News* article in 1938 stated that ‘two strapping touch football teams made their debut’ the previous weekend. The ‘blue-jeaned Vassarites’ played on a wet field with Team A winning 18-6, but the report contained no information on who comprised the teams.[139] The game was informal enough for players to be wearing jeans, yet formal enough for the college newspaper’s ‘Athletic News’ section to include an article. The 1938-9 Athletic Association Report mentioned that students demonstrated ‘considerable enthusiasm’ for informal games of touch football on weekends the previous year. The report further stated that the sport could replace games such as field hockey, lacrosse, and baseball, which had caused injuries when played ‘with men guests at weekends’.[140] A 1939 *Miscellany News* article reveals that Vassar students did play the sport against male guests, stating that ‘Yale and Vassar had a pretty fancy touch football game … last Sunday afternoon’. The report mentioned that there was ‘no danger involved … except that the girls weren’t over-adept at catching the pigskin’.[141] In making this comment, the author reassured readers that the students would come to no harm, but the statement also conformed to stereotypes about women’s lack of footballing ability. Further evidence that touch

[138] Report of the Athletic Association 1938-1939, 1939, PE 1, Physical Education Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[139] ‘Athletic Notes’, *Vassar Miscellany News*, 23 November 1938, 4.
[140] Report of the Athletic Association 1938-1939, 1939, PE 1, Physical Education Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[141] ‘From the Sidelines’, *Vassar Miscellany News*, 25 October 1939, 5.

football remained an appropriate game for women to play against male guests comes from the *Vassar Chronicle*. In 1946, the *Chronicle* reminded students that '[p]ermission to play team sports with boys, with the exception of baseball, touch football, and basketball, must be secured from the President of the Athletic Association'.[142] These examples demonstrate that not only was the game becoming increasingly formal, and acceptable, at Vassar through the involvement of the Athletic Association, but also that the college's belief that students first played touch football on campus in the 1960s is incorrect.

The Athletic Association and the Department of Physical Education at Vassar believed that novel games, such as touch football, could help increase student participation in physical activity. Part of the Association's aim for introducing touch football was to find sports that all students could enjoy, a goal that conformed to the play day philosophy of 'every girl in a game and a game for every girl'.[143] For example, the 1943-4 Report of the Athletic Association indicates that in an attempt to 'interest the non-responsive students … [w]e had interhall hockey on Saturday afternoons or Sunday mornings, touch football on Sundays as well as golf, tennis and soccer.'[144] Similarly, the *Vassar Chronicle*, in November 1948, stated that '[t]ouch football was announced for Sunday afternoon' in an attempt to gain more participation.[145]

The Athletic Association's development of intramural competition provides further evidence of the sport's increasing importance at Vassar. In 1943, the Association promoted touch football as a competitive sport in its own right and not just as an

[142] 'No title', *Vassar Chronicle*, 15 June 1946, 6.
[143] Lynn Coutrier, '"Play With Us, Not Against Us": The Debate About Play Days in the Regulation of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 4 (2008): 422.
[144] Report of the Athletic Association 1943-1944, 1944, PE 1, Physical Education Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[145] 'Sport Shorts', *Vassar Chronicle*, 6 November 1948, 5.

acceptable activity to play against male visitors, or casually on weekend mornings. For example, in September that year, Joan Trumbull, the Athletic Association President, gave a speech to first-year students in which she stated the Association's desire to start more sports competitions between the halls and classes. Activities that the Association wanted to promote included tennis, golf, and touch football.[146] On 9 September, the *Vassar Miscellany News* reported that the 'fall activities of the Athletic Association are now well under way', including touch football.[147] Later that month the same publication stated that following 'many try-outs' students were going to play a touch football game on Sunday afternoon.[148] The fact the students held try-outs suggests a high level of interest and organisation and that the Athletic Association was keen to find the very best players. In years when many educators discouraged women from competitiveness, the Vassar students were taking football seriously. While these games had the Department of Physical Education's support, it is possible to view them as informal events. However, Jean Williams observes: 'the early college intramural programs could be interpreted as the first games to be recognized as sport or organized recreation'.[149] These intramural touch football games, according to Williams' definition, can be considered as organised sport.

While Vassar provides some of the earliest evidence of formalised competition in touch football, it was not the only college to utilise the sport in this way. For example, in the mid-1940s, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) introduced touch football on their campus, and for similar reasons to those at Vassar. The Department of Physical Education for Women supported the students playing the sport through the Women's

[146] Chapel Speech to Freshmen, September 1943, PE 14a, Physical Education Collection, Archives and Special Collections, Vassar College Library, Poughkeepsie, New York.
[147] Joanne Farris, 'From the Sidelines', *Vassar Miscellany News*, 9 September 1943, 3.
[148] 'From the Sidelines', *Vassar Miscellany News*, 23 September 1943, 4.
[149] Jean Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 49.

Recreation Association, a student-led organisation. This collaboration was common practice as some female physical educators in the 1930s created additional opportunities for competitive sport for young women 'under the auspices of a student organisation – usually called the women's athletic association or women's recreation association'.[150] In the 1946-7 academic year, students at UNH 'enthusiastically welcomed' touch football as an intramural sport for women.[151] The Interhouse Board organised the event, and the tournament provided points for the interhouse trophy. The Board stated that their role was to provide 'opportunities and promote keen competition for every girl on campus'.[152] The involvement of the Interhouse Board offers further evidence of an educational establishment using the sport to increase participation levels. That year, 150 female students in ten teams took part, playing eight-minute quarters.[153] The Department of Physical Education's belief that touch football appealed to students is apparent in the university newspaper. For example, in October 1948, *The New Hampshire* reported that 'our favorite sport, touch football, will be getting under way this week'.[154] The lack of faculty involvement in campus newspapers suggests the students genuinely enjoyed touch football and that interested staff members did not make this comment. Miss Browne, from the Department of Physical Education for Women, created the university's version of the game from four sets of men's rules.[155] Students took the sport seriously enough for Browne to hold a touch football clinic and a practice scrimmage in October 1949.[156] The activity remained popular as the competition continued throughout the 1950s. The 1954 yearbook even included

[150] Roberta Park, 'Women as Leaders: What Women Have Attained in and through the Field of Physical Education', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 27, no. 7 (2010): 1256-7.
[151] 'W.R.A', *The Granite 1947* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 1947), 234.
[152] 'Interhouse Board', *The Granite 1947* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 1947), 236.
[153] 'UNH Women Steal Glory of Gridiron', *The New Hampshire*, 17 October, 1946, 1; 'WRA Notes', *The New Hampshire*, 4 December 1947, 4.
[154] 'Football Campaign Causes Comedy of Errors', *The New Hampshire*, 21 October 1948, 4.
[155] 'WRA Notes', *The New Hampshire*, 23 October 1947, 5.
[156] 'WRA Notes', *The New Hampshire*, 13 October 1949, 4.

players' participation in touch football, alongside activities such as their involvement in sororities and extra-curricular clubs, next to their photographs, suggesting that the sport was an important part of campus life.[157]

Educators' inclusion of touch football at UNH was part of a broader national movement to incorporate the sport into female physical education. For example, *The New Hampshire*, in a 1947 article, explained that the reason for including the sport for female students was as 'part of a national experiment to determine whether or not the activity [was] suitable for college women'. The author further claimed that if the tournament was a success 'the game may be accepted as an official sport for college women all over the country'.[158] The proposals from UNH had a wider reach than merely their campus. For example, a 1952 *Pampa Daily News* article emphasised that the aim of a match between girls from the Lefors and McLean high schools in Lefors, Texas, was to develop the 'sportsmanship and good will pioneered by the University of New Hampshire for the benefit of women students'.[159] The sport was obviously popular as the report mentioned that Lefors had four teams and McLean three. Similarly, a 1951 article in the Alpha Xi Delta sorority magazine stated that UNH was a 'pioneer' in the sport and 'over 100 Physical Education teachers have requested copies of the rules now in effect for women's touch football'.[160] The inclusion of the activity in a large, coeducational university was a change from the all-female colleges of Vassar and Radcliffe. Modified football for women flourished on a campus that also had a male contact team, yet educators were unconcerned since the amendments made it suitable for young women. The staff at UNH created a version of the sport that faculty in other

[157] 'Helen Ruth Barrett', *The Granite 1954* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 1954), 48.
[158] 'WRA Notes', 5.
[159] 'All-Girl Grid Tilt at Lefors Tonight', *Pampa Daily News* (Pampa, TX), 11 November 1952, 4.
[160] 'Sports for Charity: Touch Football Earns Gifts for Cancer Fund', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1951, 131-2.

educational institutions could use, sparking an increase in young women playing modified football.

The sport spread to high schools, where some educators used it as a competitive activity for female students, even though many physical instructors did not widely accept competition for young women in the 1930s and 1940s. For example, Agnes Wayman, the Head of the Physical Education Department at Barnard College, wrote in 1938 that female collegiate and high school students should not take part in competitions, especially any 'masculine type of events'.[161] Play days and sports days continued to be the primary version of competition in female physical education programmes throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and it was only in the 1960s that intercollegiate contests significantly increased.[162] However, high schools included touch football as a competitive sport throughout these years. For example, in 1945, the Greater Atlanta High Schools included an interscholastic touch football tournament as part of their athletic programmes. The *Atlanta Constitution* simply stated the results of the matches and provided the winning players' names.[163] Similarly, a high school in Texas, that reports did not name, held a girls' football tournament in 1947 and the article simply provided an account of the final game.[164] Also in Texas, in 1955, Frisco High School defeated Allen High School 30-27 in what the reporter described as their 'second straight football win'.[165] Authors of these reports were unconcerned about the events and did not belittle the players' achievements or highlight their appearances.

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[161] Agnes Wayman, *A Modern Philosophy of Physical Education: With Special Implications for Girls and Women and for the College Freshman Program* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1938), 164.
[162] Coutrier, 'Play With Us, Not Against Us', 432; Austin, *Democratic Sports*, 171.
[163] 'North Fulton Wins Touch Grid Crowns', *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 March 1945, 5.
[164] 'Girls Football Tourney Is Ended Here Wednesday', *Vernon Daily Record* (Vernon, TX), 13 November 1947, 9.
[165] 'Frisco Features Girls' Football', *Denton Record-Chronicle*, 10 November 1955, 2 of Section Two.

The vast majority of these formal competitions took place in Texas, possibly because of the University of Texas' focus on the sport for women. The numerous examples from Texas may also be a sampling issue: the fact that libraries and archives have digitised more newspapers from Texas than from many other states may skew results.[166] It is clear that not only were students playing touch football on campuses but also that they played the sport competitively against other schools regularly. These examples demonstrate differing pedagogical attitudes about competitive sport for young women, but they may also be a regional phenomenon.

The University of Texas developed the most formal version of modified football of any of the colleges, and its educators encouraged the sport's expansion outside of its campus. For example, in 1949, the *Pampa Daily News* reported that the 'women's physical training department at the University of Texas is a pioneer in touch football for girls'.[167] The article mentioned that Shiela O'Gara from the department had spoken about the sport at a national physical education conference. O'Gara, having revised the rules, included touch football for female freshmen in the 1949-50 academic year. The journalist invited schools and colleges who wanted to know more about the rules to contact the university's physical education department for copies. A year later the *Daily Texan* compared the rules of male and female touch football and explained that students at the university played games 'about every afternoon'.[168] The fact that a member of staff spoke at a national conference on the use of touch football and the department revised the rules demonstrates that educators highly respected the activity.

[166] Newspapers.com, 'All Newspapers', https://www.newspapers.com/papers/ (accessed 24 January 2020).
[167] 'Texas U Co-Eds Invade Another Male Field; They Now Play Football', *Pampa Daily News* (Pampa, TX), 5 October 1949, 7.
[168] Louise Cole, 'Men's Grid World Fading; UT Females Play Rough Too', *Daily Texan* (Austin, TX), 29 October 1950, 4.

The University of Texas not only believed that women should play touch football, but also that they should demonstrate proficiency and knowledge. For example, one of the physical education department's aims for the sport was to 'develop the skills involved in the game'.[169] This purpose provides evidence of the university's belief that it was appropriate for women to learn football skills. Despite this progress, the report did not suggest that the sport was a stepping-stone to playing contact football, an activity that most physical educators in the 1940s continued to view as unsuitable for women. Touch football tests that the University of Texas introduced demonstrate the increasing importance of the sport on campus. For example, as early as 1949, the department tested students' knowledge of rules, and associated penalties for infringements, through situational examples and true or false questions. Teachers used physical tests to assess students' proficiency in a variety of skills, including 'forward pass for distance', 'punt for distance', 'running around obstacles', 'throw for accuracy', and 'centering for accuracy'.[170] These tests provide an early example of an educational establishment using football in this manner and demonstrate that some physical educators believed it was suitable for women to become adept at football. No longer were football skills a purely male domain. Staff not only encouraged women to play the sport but also required them to demonstrate aptitude and understanding, something not in evidence before.

In the late 1930s and the 1940s, educators increasingly utilised touch football as an acceptable activity for young women. Physical education departments supported the sport for a variety of reasons, including a continuation of football in times of war, as a

[169] Aims and Objectives, Undated, 3R242, Touch Football Folder, UT Physical Training for Women records, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
[170] Touch Football Test, 1949, 3R242, Touch Football Folder, UT Physical Training for Women records, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Touch Football Tests, Fall 1951, 3R242, Touch Football Folder, UT Physical Training for Women records, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

less physical sport to play against male visitors, and to increase women's participation in physical activity. Touch football was a novel sport that educators believed a wide variety of students would enjoy. Departments increasingly formalised the game through organised competition, and in some instances it became a required element of students' physical education curriculum. Educators not only encouraged young women to demonstrate their football-playing abilities but also expected them to excel in the sport. Football, in its modified form, became a suitable means for women to exhibit their sporting prowess.

Conclusion

Despite the initial rumours of football in the women's colleges being false, it is clear that some educational establishments incorporated both contact and touch football into their physical activity programmes. A handful of schools and colleges introduced contact football for their female students earlier than the modified version, with some having formal teams as early as the 1920s. Shifting societal factors and the decade's sporting golden age influenced these changes; increasing female activism, the demand for equal rights, and women's growing visibility in public life all provided the backdrop for women's opportunities to play contact football. However, emerging anti-competitive attitudes in physical education meant that both media and staff were ambivalent about these teams. Oriard claims that 'concern about sissifying football was inevitably highest when American life seemed softest, in the 1920s and 1950s, not the 1930s and 1940s', yet little media evidence exists to suggest this anxiety was an issue.[171] For example, women played contact football in the 1920s when, as he states, concern was highest.

[171] Oriard, *King Football*, 335.

The few examples of games could have been the reason for little outcry; had women been playing contact games more widely, the media response may have differed.

Female physical educators' use of touch football in the 1930s and 1940s was a product of decades in which attitudes against competitive sport for women prevailed. The shift towards the sport in these decades reflects changing pedagogical beliefs about how physically assertive women should be in the games they played. The 1930s saw many educators emphasise play days and 'the notion of sport for all (intramurals) rather than the few (intercollegiate athletics)'.[172] The alterations to football echo the changes made to baseball. Educators modified baseball to softball, and in 1933 the Amateur Softball Association formalised the term.[173] As Merrie Fidler notes, softball, rather than baseball, 'predominated as a sport for girls and women in schools and colleges'.[174] Football followed this pattern of modification, ensuring that educators saw it as an appropriate activity for their female students. Despite the strong anti-competitive movement that women's sport and physical education faced in the 1930s and 1940s, educators utilised touch football as a competitive sport. Some physical education departments used the activity for intramural competition on college campuses, while others included the sport in competitive tournaments played against other colleges or schools.

These examples challenge the narrative about the range of sports that collegiate and high school women played. In 1937, Mabel Lee, the Chairman of the Division of Physical Education for Women at the University of Nebraska, wrote that the 'five most

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[172] Shawn Ladda, 'The Early Beginnings of Intercollegiate Women's Soccer in the United States', *Physical Educator* 57, no. 2 (2000): 107.
[173] Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 131.
[174] Merrie Fidler, *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 18.

popular group sports with girls and women … are basketball, volleyball, baseball (modified), field hockey, and soccer' and made no mention of football.[175] This comment also demonstrates that baseball was only acceptable once educators modified it. Furthermore, Lee referred to the activity as both 'softball' and 'kittenball' to emphasise that it was a genteel sport.[176] Wayman, in her 1938 *A Modern Philosophy of Physical Education*, explicitly stated that 'football and other games of like calibre have no place in the physical education program of the modern girl'.[177] Like Lee, Wayman listed the most popular sports: basketball was the most widespread, 'followed closely by tennis, archery, swimming, baseball, hockey, volley ball [sic], ping pong, badminton, golf, dancing, riding, soccer, fencing, shuffleboard, rifle etc.'.[178] Neither Lee's nor Wayman's books made references to women playing football on high school or college campuses. Mentions of young women playing football in educational settings are also missing in recent academic research. Consequently, these examples provide new insight into the activities of women in both high schools and colleges.

This chronology demonstrates that women's ability to play football in educational settings in these years reflected wider views on gender and sporting activity. Educators' changing pedagogical attitudes influenced the form of football that female students played. The media's response similarly mirrored these changes. Where women contravened social norms by playing contact football, newspaper reports provide evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence. Even the mere suggestion that

[175] Mabel Lee, *The Conduct of Physical Education: Its Organization and Administration* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1937), 24.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Wayman, *A Modern Philosophy of Education*, 164-5.
[178] Ibid., 171.

women at Vassar and Wellesley might be playing football in the 1890s resulted in newspaper coverage emphasising the players' orthodox femininity.

These examples are the most formal way that women played football between 1890 and 1960 considered so far. They represent support from educators for female students to play the sport, even if it meant modifications. The novelty of modified football meant that it was a way to inspire more students to take part in physical activity. Educators encouraged these largely non-competitive, touch football games, yet in the same decades highly competitive women's contact leagues developed. In the 1930s and 1940s, some entrepreneurs created professional women's football leagues to benefit from the originality of women playing the sport financially.

Chapter 4: Women's Professional Leagues

In January 1898, a police officer arrested Nora Sullivan, 16, on charges of vagrancy near San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, after Sullivan had run away to join a local women's football team.[1] Sullivan left home while out walking with her mother, who the *San Francisco Call* mentioned was 'determined to have … sent to some public institution'.[2] Judge Conlan, who heard Sullivan's vagrancy case, sent her to the Magdalen Asylum because of her behaviour.[3] Sullivan was, according to the *San Francisco Call*, inspired to run away after reading about the San Francisco Grays and the Oakland Browns professional women's football teams in the local press. The court's extreme reaction suggests a deep unease about Sullivan's behaviour and women's football. Despite the concern of this judge, and physical educators, about the prospect of young women playing football, especially in public, between 1897 and 1941, four women's leagues developed. The earliest of these leagues played its games in San Francisco in December 1897, the second between December 1933 and October 1934 in Toledo, Ohio. The third league took place in October to December in 1939 in Los Angeles, and the fourth in June and July 1941 in Chicago. These organisations were significant steps towards professional, highly competitive football for women. Unlike the examples discussed in Chapter 3, these competitions did not emerge from educational establishments, nor were they simple, informal games. Instead, the leagues provide clear evidence of entrepreneurial activity in women's football.

Entrepreneurs believed that they could make money from people interested in watching women play football. These leagues were not player-led initiatives but had obvious commercial stimuli aimed at making money. Michael Oriard claims that 'women's

[1] 'Charged with Vagrancy', *San Francisco Call*, 10 January 1898, 5.
[2] Ibid.
[3] 'Her Ambition Crushed', *San Francisco Call*, 11 January 1898, 7.

professional football was not covered as news but as novelty, in the context of highly gendered sports pages on which women most conspicuously represented sex and beauty'.[4] However, an analysis of reports of league games reveals that this style of coverage was frequently not the case. Newspapers often supported these leagues and regularly reported on matches in a similar manner to men's games. While reporters made occasional references to players' appearances, these comments were not the dominant discourse. Photographs accompanying some articles suggest that the press did occasionally treat the women as novelties. Cartoons of the 1897 San Francisco league and newsreel footage of matches in Toledo and Los Angeles in 1933 and 1939 respectively demonstrate editorial interest in the players' orthodox appearances rather than their football skills, underpinned by conventional tropes on femininity. Despite positive media coverage, the leagues' short lifespans suggest that spectators viewed them as novelties, although players' lack of interest in continued participation and cultural resistance were also crucial. The brevity of these leagues means that there are few archival records. Consequently, newspaper reports and newsreels remain the primary way to explore these organisations.

These leagues arose within distinct local contexts that influenced their development and longevity. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, entrepreneurs in the United States seized on the opportunity to promote sports events involving women, and this included various codes of football in the San Francisco area.[5] For example, in 1893, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on a practice for a women's soccer match in the city's Central Park as part of Superintendent Daniel Roderick McNeill's attempt to form

[4] Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 360.
[5] Dilwyn Porter, 'Entrepreneurship', in *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, ed. Stephen Pope and John Nauright (London: Routledge, 2009), 198.

a series of games.[6] In 1897, the Golden Gate Carnival's organisers wanted to include a humorous football game played by 'short-haired female athletes in carnival costume'.[7] These examples indicate that those running some commercial events viewed women playing sports, and especially various football codes, as a source of entertainment. Women publicly playing football certainly met one of the critical characteristics of entrepreneurship, the use of 'innovative activity', given the importance of orthodox masculinity to the sport's founders.[8] The league in San Francisco is arguably the earliest example of such a development for women's football and the media's response to it reflects its emergence in the sport's early years.

The leagues for women's football between 1897 and 1941 coincide with other professional sporting opportunities for women. Entrepreneurs established the 1897 women's football league in San Francisco when baseball was the primary professional team sport for women. As early as 1875, a match between the Blonds and Brunettes in Springfield, Illinois, was the first time entrepreneurs paid women to play baseball.[9] Further attempts at professional teams emerged in the late nineteenth century, although women's attempts to take up the 'national game' often attracted intense criticism.[10] By inviting the male gaze, these women 'violated Victorian norms of feminine respectability.'[11] Debra Shattuck notes that 'reports of women baseball players in the 1860s and 1870s often appeared alongside articles about the women's

[6] 'They Kicked the Air', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 November 1893, 15; Brian Bunk, 'Colleen Brawns and Bonnie Lasses: Women's Soccer and Sporting Culture in Nineteenth Century San Francisco', unpublished article, 2017.
[7] 'Girls Will Play a Football Game', *San Francisco Call*, 21 March 1897, 7.
[8] Stephen Hardy, 'Entrepreneurs, Organisations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians', *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (1986): 20.
[9] Roberta Park, 'Contesting the Norm: Women and Professional Sports in Late-Nineteenth Century America', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 5 (2012): 742.
[10] Ibid., 742.
[11] Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 20.

rights movement', linking these events with the wider political cause.[12] Following the Blonds and Brunettes teams of the 1870s, other entrepreneurs provided women with the opportunity to play professional baseball. For example, Sylvester F. Wilson, a newspaper publisher and theatrical manager, 'organised female baseball troupes in at least 10 of the 24 years between 1879 and 1903' and in 1886, Victor E. Gutmann, of whom little else is known, organised the Blue Stockings of Frisco and the Red Stockings of Chicago.[13] While women played basketball extensively, it was not a professional activity. Some female teams played in front of crowds and received positive media coverage, for example at Ohio State University, but these events were intercollegiate contests, not professional sport.[14] As Robin Markels notes, these games provide examples of 'women seeking and finding achievement in the public rather than the private sphere', often contrasting 'many gender platitudes of the time'.[15] While the Progressive Era and the New Woman's emergence provided women with increasing sporting opportunities, playing sport in public contravened social norms for women from the higher classes.

The leagues that entrepreneurs formed in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago between 1933 and 1941 add to the limited range of highly public, professional, team sports that women played in these years. For example, between the 1920s and 1950s, 'women's basketball was one of the most popular spectator sports in small towns and rural communities across the country'.[16] In 1927 in Iowa, the girls' basketball tournament

[12] Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, 37.
[13] Debra Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 117, 20.
[14] Robin Markels, 'Bloomer Basketball and Its Suspender Suspension: Women's Intercollegiate Competition at Ohio State, 1904-1907', *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 1 (2000): 34-5.
[15] Ibid., 35-6.
[16] Pamela Grundy, 'From Amazons to Glamazons: The Rise and Fall of North Carolina Women's Basketball, 1920-1960', *Journal of American History* 87, no. 1 (2000): 113.

generated $9,000 from ticket sales, by 1950 this had risen to $84,000.[17] As Susan Cahn notes, this event in Iowa was an 'unabashedly commercial venture'.[18] Philip Wrigley, the Chicago Cubs' owner, formed a women's baseball league as a profit-making activity to ensure that Wrigley Field continued to make money if authorities cancelled the male game during the war.[19] Merrie Fidler emphasises Wrigley's entrepreneurial flair by stating that in the early 1930s he promoted Ladies' Days.[20] Organisers provided women with discounted or free entry to these events, anticipating that these female fans would attend with male companions and increase overall attendance.

The organisers of these professional sporting opportunities for women frequently highlighted the players' looks and appearances. For example, in 1931, Jackie Mitchell joined the Chattanooga Lookouts, a male Double-A minor league team, but she was more a 'sexualised publicity stunt' than a genuine team member.[21] Similarly, in the mid-1940s, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League required players to accentuate their femininity by wearing skirts and makeup during games.[22] Marilyn Cohen notes in her history of women's baseball that this emphasis was because 'the Progressive Era, with its concern for social equality and justice for women, was over and the world was at war.'[23] Professional basketball for women emerged in the 1930s. The leading professional team was little more than a gimmick; the All-American

[17] Pamela Grundy, Murry Nelson, and Mark Dyreson, 'The Emergence of Basketball as an American National Pastime: From a Popular Participant Sport to a Spectacle of Nationhood', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 141.
[18] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 84.
[19] Merrie Fidler, *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 30.
[20] Ibid., 31.
[21] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 38-9.
[22] All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, 'Rules of Conduct', http://www.aagpbl.org/history/rules-of-conduct (accessed 16 June 2021).
[23] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 44.

Redheads dyed their hair and travelled across the country playing men's teams using male rules.[24] Another team, the Hazel Walker's Arkansas Travelers, 'developed a handful of comic, often flirtatious routines.'[25] Organisers' emphasis on these women's orthodox femininity corresponded with social changes. The Depression 'reinforced female domesticity', and during World War II, 'glamour was a related theme in the idioms through which women's war work was demarcated as female.'[26] A clear emphasis on femininity and appropriate roles was evident in sport and the workplace.

Physicians, sports administrators, and journalists' arguments against professional sports for women largely remained the same between 1897 and 1941. In earlier years, journalists critiqued the New Woman's participation in professional masculine sports, believing that their involvement undermined 'sexual mores and contribut[ed] to an emerging "crisis in masculinity." '[27] These same groups thought that women were not physically strong enough for professional sports.[28] As Marilyn Cohen notes, the ruling that barred women from playing in baseball's minor leagues in the 1930s was 'stubbornly premised in nineteenth-century assumptions of women's biological inferiority and moral superiority [and] remained in place for forty years.'[29] In 1950 a study revealed that only 5 percent of professional athletes in the United States were female, demonstrating the difficulty women faced in overcoming this mindset and a lack

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[24] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 104.
[25] Ibid.,, 106.
[26] S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States: 1830-1945* (Basingstoke, MacMillan Press, 1999), 246; Ruth Milkman, 'Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II', in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004),470.
[27] Amber Roessner, 'The New Woman as Athlete: Coverage of the Sporting Woman in the Gilded Age Press', in *After the War: The Press in a Changing America, 1865-1900*, ed. David Sachsman (New York: Routledge, 2017), n.p.
[28] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: MA, Harvard University Press, 2003), 47.
[29] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 72.

of opportunity.[30] Yet, despite these issues, the leagues for women playing American football found remarkable levels of positive media coverage and created little widespread concern.

The leagues' locations are significant, as they reflect their regions' broader attitudes towards both progressivism and sport. California was the base for two leagues, a state associated with liberalism. Evidence of political progressiveness comes from the fact that 'most delegates to the constitutional convention were … determined to make California a free state' when Congress admitted it to the Union in 1850.[31] Outlawing slavery 11 years before the American Civil War meant that for the first time, there were more free states than slave states in the union. Similarly, in 1911, the California legislature passed liberal measures, including 'laws providing for mothers' pensions, and [the] establishment of a minimum wage for women and minors'.[32] For some Californians, these progressive tendencies influenced their sport as well as their politics. For example, it was in San Francisco in 1893 that the 'Colleen Brawns defeated the Bonnie Lasses 2-0 in the first documented women's soccer game in the United States'.[33] Additionally, in the early 1900s two minor league baseball competitions, the Pacific Coast League and the Southern California Winter League, included talented black players in early examples of integration in the sport.[34] The locations of the other women's football leagues in the Midwest reflect that region's strong sporting background. The National Football League (NFL) emerged, in part, from the leagues and teams in Ohio in the early 1900s, and the league's first President

[30] Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 33.
[31] Andrew Rolle and Arthur C. Verge, *California: A History*, 8th edn (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 122.
[32] Ibid., 229.
[33] Bunk, 'Colleen Brawns', n.p.
[34] Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams: How Baseball Linked the United States and Japan in Peace and War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 67-9.

was Joe Carr, the Columbus Panhandles' manager.[35] Similarly, Murry Nelson traces the National Basketball Association's origins to the 1930s Midwest Conference.[36] The region is also strongly associated with women's sport; since 1925 the aforementioned six-on-six basketball tournament in Iowa attracted large crowds to its week-long finals.[37] Additionally, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) began with four teams based in Midwestern cities.[38] The progressive outlooks of individuals in these regions, as well as the areas' strong traditions in sports administration and existing sporting infrastructure, help explain why women's professional football leagues emerged in these states rather than elsewhere.

Entrepreneurs established the later leagues in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago during decades when physical educators limited competition for women, as explored in Chapter 3. In the 1920s and 1930s, some female physical educators denounced 'excessive, commercialised, exploitative sports for girls and women', leading to the development of play days.[39] Many educators continued to recommend play days and intramurals as the most appropriate forms of competition for women into the 1950s and beyond.[40] For example, Smith College President Herbert Davis barred intercollegiate sports contests at the institution, a ban that administrators did not rescind until 1971.[41] In 1926, a *Christian Science Monitor* article mentioned that the Women's Division of the

[35] Chris Willis, *The Man Who Built the National Football League: Joe F. Carr* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), n.p.
[36] Murry R. Nelson, 'Insular America: The NBA began in Akron? The Midwest Conference in the 1930s', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 22, no. 6 (2005): 990.
[37] Shelley Lucas, 'Courting Controversy: Gender and Power in Iowa Girls' Basketball', *Journal of Sport History* 30, no. 3 (2003): 283.
[38] Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 147.
[39] Jaime Schultz, *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women's Sport* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 73.
[40] Lynn Coutrier, '"Play With Us, Not Against Us": The Debate About Play Days in the Regulation of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 4 (2008): 432.
[41] Shawn Ladda, 'The Early Beginnings of Intercollegiate Women's Soccer in the United States', *Physical Educator* 57, no. 2 (2000): 109.

National Amateur Athletic Federation denounced 'the exploitation of girl athletes by industrial concerns "for the enjoyment of the spectator or for athletic reputation" '.[42] Similarly, in 1937, the American Physical Education Association (APEA) stated that the 'formal team offers its greatest danger because of unscrupulous promoters', and participants should see sport as recreation and 'not for the amusement or entertainment of others'.[43] In establishing professional women's football leagues in these years, entrepreneurs disregarded educators' concerns about formal competition and provided girls and women with another way to play football.

Entrepreneurial Influence in Women's Football Leagues

The four leagues shared similar characteristics, features that demonstrate their organisers' intentions to make money. Male entrepreneurs formed these leagues rather than players, although one league had two female team owners. For example, the *San Francisco Call* stated that 'Messrs. Stewart and Seeba [are] to supply the long felt want' to see women play football.[44] While it has not been possible to find out more about these men, they intended to create teams in every major city in the country beginning with a series of games played over the Christmas period of 1897 in San Francisco.[45] The league in Los Angeles in 1939 was the brainchild of Marty Fiedler, a promoter who organised softball games between female teams at Fiedler's Fairfax Field.[46] The football team was an extension of this initiative and used the same players. In 1941, the *Indianapolis Star* named Martin Flynn, of whom little else is known, as one

[42] 'Against Exploiting Girls in Athletics', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 11 May 1926, 16.
[43] American Physical Education Association, *Standards in Athletics for Girls and Women: Guiding Principles in the Organisation and Administration of Athletic Programs* (Washington DC: National Section on Women's Athletics, 1937), 18, 46.
[44] 'Girls to Line Up On the Gridiron', *San Francisco Call*, 21 December 1897, 8.
[45] Ibid.
[46] 'Softball Opens at Fairfax Field', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 1939, 10.

of the Chicago league's directors.[47] The organisation demonstrated a progressive outlook with female owners, Muriel Ickos and Fritzie Hechtman (who also played on the team), of the Chicago Bombers.[48] Little evidence remains about these women, but female owners of professional sports franchises, and especially football, were rare in the 1940s. Glyma Orr took control of the Dallas Rams American Football League team in 1934, and Violet Bidwill inherited the Chicago Cardinals football team in 1947 following her husband's death, but there are no other known examples of female owners of football teams in the 1930s and 1940s.[49] While female ownership suggests that the Chicago league was progressive, it could also indicate that men were not interested in becoming involved. The league in Toledo differs, with no named organiser evident in newspaper reports. An obituary for Herman Metzger, a former football player in the semi-professional leagues in Toledo, suggests that he may have established women's football in the area in the 1920s, but it stated nothing about the 1930s.

In a demonstration of the organisers' desire to enhance the leagues' profitability, they held matches in stadiums to increase spectator numbers. For example, in San Francisco, the league used the Velodrome grounds, an outdoor wooden cycling facility with stands for spectating. The *Toledo Blade* stated that players in that city's league had been practising daily at Swayne Field, a minor league baseball park, and they were going to play by male rules.[50] The team's regular practice indicates that both players and coaches were committing significant time to the project. In Los Angeles, the plan was to have an eight-team league playing contact football in the Victor

[47] 'Plans Announced Here for Women's National Professional Football Loop', *Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis, IN), 30 January 1941, 16.
[48] 'Puckelwartz is Star On Grid Girls Team', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 10 June 1941, 11.
[49] 'Dallas Rams Will Be Directed By A Woman', *Boston Daily Globe*, 31 October 1934, 21; 'Chicago Cardinals Have Young Boss', *Seymour Daily Tribune* (Seymour, IN), 20 July 1951, 10.
[50] 'Girl Gridders Battle Sunday', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 2 December 1933, 11.

McLaglen stadium.[51] This venue was home to soccer in Los Angeles for a while and suffered damage in 1938 when some of the grandstands collapsed because of the Los Angeles River flooding, which could have resulted in it being available to the proposed football league.[52] Other games in Los Angeles took place at Gilmore stadium which Earl Gilmore commissioned in 1934. The venue hosted professional football and midget auto racing, and, by 1937, had a 16,000-person capacity.[53] Male professional football teams also used Gilmore stadium in 1939, the same year the women's teams began.[54] A game in November 1939 was, according to one report, 'the first girls' gridiron contest ever held under lights' and came just ten years after the NFL held its first floodlit game.[55] Scheduling the match at night meant that more spectators could attend than might typically be able to on a Wednesday daytime, potentially increasing gate receipts.

Entrepreneurs in Chicago adopted a more cautious approach by choosing not to hire large venues; instead, they organised initial matches as part of large, non-football events. For example, reports stated that organisers' planned the first match for 28 June 1941, with a second game as part of the Gladstone Roleo and Forest Festival.[56] While the event focused on outdoor recreational sports such as wood chopping and fly-casting, the author stated that '[t]here also are to be sailing races, a Venetian carnival, and a game between the New York [sic] Bombers and the Chicago Rockets'.[57] Using

[51] 'Girls to Form Grid Circuit', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 January 1939, 15.
[52] Jim Thurman, '10 L.A. Sports Venues That Are No More', 23 December 2013, https://www.laweekly.com/10-l-a-sports-venues-that-are-no-more/ (accessed 2 May 2018).
[53] 'Hollywood Club Will Use Gilmore Stadium', *Los Angeles Times*, 25 September 1937, 11.
[54] Cal Whorton, 'Bulldogs in Homecoming Encounter: Los Angeles Plays Oakland', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 November 1939, 24.
[55] 'Girl Gridders Clash Tonight', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 1939, 10; National Football League, 'History: 1921-1930', http://www.nfl.com/history/chronology/1921-1930 (accessed 25 May 2018).
[56] 'Puckelwartz is Star', 11; 'Travel Queries Answered', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 18 June 1941, 15.
[57] 'Travel Queries Answered', 15.

an established event as a means of introducing an unconventional sport to a large audience suggests that the entrepreneurs were concerned that the league may not be a viable endeavour on its own.

League organisers found different ways to make money other than through gate receipts, further demonstrating the entrepreneurial nature of these endeavours. For example, in Los Angeles, Fiedler created the league as a means to fill the dormant time in the autumn between softball seasons, and he was able to field two sides instantly from his teams.[58] Because of a lack of female voices in articles, it is hard to know what the players thought of their switch to football. The only comment comes from a former player, Melitas Forster, who stated in her brief online memoir, 'I guess enough of us were ready for Marty to put 2 teams on a field'.[59] Sponsors of the softball league included 'Young's Market, Columbia Pictures, Perfection Bread, Bank of America, Pepsicola' amongst others, and Fiedler's use of sponsorship was also evident in the football league.[60] For example, two team names make explicit links to car dealerships (Marshall and Clampett De Soto's and the Chet Relph Chevrolets).[61] Fred Clampett, the head of Marshall and Clampett, De Soto, and Plymouth dealers in Los Angeles, was thus a businessman with a history of sponsoring female sports teams, having formed the Marshall and Clampett Girls' Baseball Club.[62] Hence, his involvement in women's football was a logical step. The softball league's sponsors included food and drink companies, while car dealerships gave their names to the women's football teams. According to Katherine Parkin, 'automobile and credit card companies …

[58] Melitas Forster, 'Were We Ready for Some Football?', https://thememoircoach.com/2013/05/27/ (accessed 1 March 2018).
[59] Ibid.
[60] 'The Home of Girls' Softball', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 January 1939, M73.
[61] Erica Westley, 'The Forgotten History of Women's Football', 5 February 2016, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/forgotten-history-womens-football-180958042/ (accessed 23 February 2018).
[62] Lynn J. Rogers, 'Automotive', *Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1940, 15.

sought out women as new consumers or imagined new roles for women, food companies wanted to maintain the status quo and rarely considered men as consumers'.[63] These sponsors were targeting both male and female spectators with their choice of advertising medium. In Chicago, *The Pantagraph* stated in April 1941 that the Secretary of State for Illinois, E. J. Hughes, had granted the league a charter and that 'the corporation has offices at 666 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, and capital stock of 500 shares'.[64] Selling shares would generate dividends for the shareholders and profits for the league. The organisers planned games to take place on weeknight evenings as the league would not be 'in a position to compete with the Chicago Bears and the New York Giants and the Detroit Lions for a while'.[65] However, the organisers' ambition was for their league to eventually become as popular as these men's professional teams.

League organisers employed qualified coaches for their teams which they probably hoped would result in good quality football, potentially increasing the numbers of paying spectators. The *San Francisco Call* stated that the league had employed 'two competent coachers – Welch and Nicholson' for the two teams, although newspapers stated little else about either man.[66] In Toledo, at the end of November 1933, the *Toledo Blade* named the coaches for the East Side team as Bus Metzger and Fritz Laugler, and the West Side team's coaches were Eddie Evans, Jimmy Dow, and Dick Lazette.[67] 'Bus' could have been Herman Metzger's nickname, but newspaper reports contain little information about any of these men. The situation is clearer in Los

[63] Katherine J. Parkin, *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 14.
[64] 'Oh Girls! Is My Helmet Straight', *The Pantagraph* (Bloomington, IL), 4 April 1941, 14.
[65] 'So Pro Football Has Come To This! Why, Girls Are Playing the Game', *St. Louis Star and Times* (St Louis, MO), 7 April 1941, 15.
[66] 'Girls to Line Up on the Gridiron', 8.
[67] 'Girl Gridders Battle Sunday', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 2 December 1933, 11.

Angeles and Chicago, where league organisers recruited coaches with high levels of knowledge and experience in football. In doing so, these entrepreneurs demonstrated their desire that the women played to the best level possible, and the leagues were serious endeavours. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that Bill Ream was the Rinky-Dinks' coach, and Lee Dempsey trained the Amazons.[68] Ream was a former collegiate player from Notre Dame, while Dempsey was a 'former member of the old Rock Island Independents football team' who had won the 1922 national championship.[69] Dempsey was a coach with a significant level of experience in the sport, having also officiated professional football games throughout the 1930s.[70] In Chicago, Chester Chesney, the former Chicago Bears centre, was one of the coaches. According to the *St. Louis Star and Times* Chesney stated that the plan was 'to work out until July, take a barnstorming and training trip, and open the league season in August with an eight- or 10-team league'.[71] Chesney's involvement was short-lived: in June 1941 he had to report for army training.[72]

To further profit from women playing football, most league organisers had ambitions to expand beyond their initial teams and games. In some cases, especially in Los Angeles and Chicago, these ambitions appear similar to the franchise model of American sports that began in baseball with the National League in 1876 and other professional sports followed, including football.[73] For example, Joe Carr, the first NFL president, believed that the only way his new league could be successful was to 'pattern itself after Major

[68] 'Girl Gridders Clash Tonight', 10.
[69] 'Hollywood Girls Battle Enrights', *Daily Dispatch* (Moline, IL), 4 September 1940, 16; Bob Brunwart and Bob Carrol, 'The Rock Island Independents', *The Coffin Corner* 5, no. 3 (1983): 4.
[70] Wilbur Adams, 'Between the Sport Lines', *Sacramento Bee* (Sacramento, CA), 11 August 1944, 9.
[71] 'So Pro Football Has Come To This!', 15.
[72] 'Gridiron Coach May Join Army', *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), 3 June 1941, S2.
[73] Bill Kte'pi, 'Franchise', in *Encyclopedia of Sports Management and Marketing*, ed. Linda E. Swayne and Mark Dodds (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011), 556.

League Baseball and have franchises in the cities where most people lived'.[74] Reports from San Francisco mentioned that the first game between the San Francisco Grays and Oakland Browns was to be the Pacific Coast Ladies Football League's opening match.[75] In Los Angeles, organisers were similarly ambitious and aimed for a 'feminine football championship encounter' against a Chicago team in the Memorial Coliseum, although the report did not mention which teams would compete in this match.[76] Articles stated that on 31 December the Hollywood Stars and the Texas Longhorns, two female professional football teams, were due to play a 'Rouge Bowl' game (a clear play on words with the Rose Bowl, the oldest college bowl game).[77] The author stated that the match was to be part of the 'annual Winter Sports Fiesta' but detailed little else in the eight-line report.[78] A similar article in the *Des Moines Tribune* mentioned that 'a Texas football team will play in the Rose bowl, after all', but it was to be a female team.[79] However, little evidence remains to indicate if either of these events took place. In 1941, the *Indianapolis Star* reported that the Chicago league's directors had opened headquarters in Indianapolis with the 'purpose of interviewing candidates for … [a] team'.[80] The league's organisers had evidently recruited 22 women for a Chicago franchise, and they were hoping to have teams in Indianapolis, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and Cleveland.[81] However, despite the businessmen's attempts to profit from expansion, many of the leagues were short-lived.

[74] Willis, *The Man Who Built the National Football League*, n.p.
[75] 'Football in Bloomers', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 December 1897, 5.
[76] 'Girls to Form Grid Circuit', 15.
[77] 'Girl Gridders in Rouge Bowl Game', *Daily Times* (New Philadelphia, OH), 11 December 1939, 6.
[78] Ibid.
[79] 'Girls' Elevens in Bowl Game', *Des Moines Tribune* (Des Moines, IA), 12 December 1939, 16.
[80] 'Plans Announced Here', 16.
[81] Ibid.

All four leagues had characteristics that reveal a clear entrepreneurial approach. Organisers ensured that players trained regularly, and they hired qualified coaches, as the owners wanted the participants to play well. Good quality football might attract more spectators than novelty games. This strategy would bode well for a longer-term endeavour, one that could expand into additional teams and matches. The entrepreneurs aimed to make a profit through gate receipts, sponsorship, and selling shares. The leagues in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago emerged in years when most physical educators restricted young women from taking part in highly competitive activities, while the San Francisco league developed at a time when the sport had become a proving ground for masculinity. As a result, these entrepreneurs challenged educators' and spectators' assumptions about appropriate activities for women and attempted to capitalise on this originality for financial gain.

News Not Novelty: The Media's Response

Having established these leagues' administrative history as best as possible, given the scant evidence, the focus now is on how the media presented these teams and their players. Newspapers' responses to these leagues were mostly positive, even though the players were contravening social norms, physical educators' opinions, and football's masculine space. These women appear to have been able to play the sport without undue press concern over their participation. This style of reporting challenges Oriard's claim that 'women's professional football was not covered as news but as novelty, in the context of a highly gendered sports page on which women most conspicuously represented sex and beauty'.[82] The newspaper reports about the later leagues in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago particularly contradict Oriard's statement. However, while much of the press treatment of these leagues was positive, newspaper

[82] Oriard, *King Football*, 360.

reports still occasionally articulated the social, moral, and pedagogical attitudes of the years in which these competitions emerged. These articles also demonstrate a shift from novelty to seriousness as the years progressed.

In some ways, the newspapers' response to these leagues was comparable to their reactions to male matches. One similarity is where editors positioned the article. Even in the 1897 league in San Francisco, before the widespread advent of sports pages, the *San Francisco Call*'s editor placed a preview of the first women's game on its 'Field of Sport' page amongst articles on angling, shooting, basketball, and handball.[83] Similarly, reports following the first and second games were primarily on sport-related pages that included horseracing, shooting, handball, and tennis reports.[84] The *Toledo Blade*'s editor likewise included all of the descriptions of the 1933 Toledo league's games on sports pages, alongside articles about male football matches as well as bowling, soccer, basketball, and golf. As far as the *Toledo Blade* was concerned, the women's games were similar to men's, and the positioning suggests that the editor assumed that the articles would interest male readers. The same is true with reports of the 1939 Los Angeles league, with editors placing all but two of the 17 articles about the matches on sports pages. Reports in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Decatur Herald*, and *Appleton-Post Crescent* were on sports pages dominated by male football articles.[85] While few reports on the outcomes of matches in the Chicago league exist, editors placed articles promoting the games on sports pages. This positioning was true for accounts in the *Indianapolis Star*, *Star Press*, *The Pantagraph*, *St. Louis Star and*

[83] 'How Girls Play Football', *San Francisco Call*, 25 December 1897, 8.
[84] 'Football? Some Said Tiddlewinks', *San Francisco Call*, 26 December 1897, 10; 'Frisco Grays Victorious', *San Francisco Call*, 3 January 1898, 6.
[85] 'De Soto Girls' Eleven Wins', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 October 1939, S10; 'Girl Grids Mix in Benefit Game', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 December 1939, 13; 'Glamor on Pacific Coast Gridirons', *Decatur Herald* (Decatur, IL), 4 November 1939, 5; 'Glamour on the Gridiron', *Appleton Post-Crescent* (Appleton, WI), 11 November 1939, 14.

Times, *Salt Lake Telegram*, *Hammond Times*, *Evening Independent*, and *Escanaba Daily Press*, amongst others.[86] Six of these eight newspapers simply mentioned the forthcoming league amongst articles about other sports. Most of the sports pages that included advertisements for the Chicago league covered minority sports, suggesting that editors believed the games were unimportant. In press coverage of all four of these women's leagues, editors rarely positioned articles on women's or entertainment pages, choosing instead to include them on sports pages where predominantly male readers would see them. This positioning indicates some acceptance on the part of editors that these events were genuine sporting contests.

Further evidence that newspapers treated the women's matches in a comparable manner to male games is evident in the articles' stylistic similarities. For example, in reports about the 1897 San Francisco league, the inclusion of a team list at the end was consistent with reports of male games.[87] However, the addition of forenames differs from reports of men's matches in the same newspaper, where the house style was just the surname. While this could be an example of Toni Bruce's rule of infantilization, likely, it was merely an editorial attempt to highlight the participants' gender. In Toledo, the article about the first game in December 1933 differed very little from reporting conventions of male games, including just a description of how the game unfolded and stating the players' names.[88] The article listed players' first and surnames, which was the convention in the *Toledo Blade* at the time for both genders.

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[86] 'Plans Announced Here', 16; 'Women's Pro Football League is Being Formed', *Star Press* (Muncie, IN), 30 January 1941, 8; 'Oh, Girls! Is My Helmet Straight?', 14; 'Gals Form Pro Football League', *The Pantagraph* (Bloomington, IL), 8 April 1941, 8; 'So Pro Football Has Come to This!', 15; 'Feminine Gird Hopefuls Plan to Form League', *Salt Lake Telegram* (Salt Lake City, UT), 7 April 1941, 13; 'Gals Taking Up Football In Big Way', *Hammond Times* (Munster, IN), 8 April 1941, 11; 'They're Putting New Kick in Gridiron Game', *Evening Independent* (Massillon, OH), 30 April 1941, 10; 'Puckelwartz is Star', 11.
[87] 'Girls to Line Up', 8.
[88] 'East Side Girls Defeat West Side Eleven, 19-0 for City Football Title', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 4 December 1933, 19.

The description of the second game, won by the East Side team 18-0, had many of the same characteristics as the first. The piece simply recounted how the touchdowns were scored and mentioned turning points of the game, such as when 'Juanita Laberdie recovered a blocked West Toledo punt'.[89] Similarly, *Los Angeles Times*' articles about the first match in the Los Angeles league in October 1939 listed the line-ups and provided a box score, both of which were common to coverage of male football games.[90] An article promoting a second game also followed reporting conventions of male games and gave the teams' average weights and line-ups.[91] Had editors intended to portray the women as novelties, then reporting on the matches in the same way as male games would not have necessarily achieved this goal.

The content of articles about the leagues epitomised the years in which these events began, and in San Francisco, reports echoed the league's emergence during football's early years. The New Woman's increasing influence, as well as the perceived crisis in middle- and upper-class masculinity, meant that despite praising some players, newspaper reports also ridiculed them. This type of reporting replicated similar reactions to women playing other sports. Roberta Park comments that in 1875 the *New York Times* reported on a female baseball match with the statement that it was 'played by totally inept "blondes and brunettes toying with the bat" '.[92] Similarly, Shattuck notes that '[a]ccounts of nineteenth century women [baseball] players generally consisted of little more than reprints of derogatory comments made about them in the newspapers.'[93] The articles about female football players were far more favourable

[89] 'East Toledo Girls' Champs', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 11 December 1933, 19.
[90] 'Fair Grid Teams Mix at Gilmore', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1939, 16; 'De Soto Girls' Eleven Wins', 10.
[91] 'Girl Gridders Clash Tonight', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 November 1939, 10.
[92] Park, 'Contesting the Norm' 743.
[93] Debra Shattuck, 'Bats, Balls and Books: Baseball and Higher Education for Women at Three Eastern Women's Colleges, 1866-1891', *Journal of Sport History* 19, no. 2 (1992): 92.

than those for their baseball-playing counterparts. For example, on 26 December 1897, two reports about the first game recounted the 250 spectators' reactions to the San Francisco Grays' 20-8 win.[94] While both articles mentioned that those in attendance were not entirely impressed with the quality of football, they also praised the players, especially Emily Hart 'who made some splendid runs'.[95] These contrasts are also evident in the *San Francisco Call* where the headline 'Football? Some Said Tiddlewinks' suggests that the game was not particularly physical or had much resemblance to football, but the article also stated that 'the participants showed remarkable aptitude'.[96] A Stanford player interviewed by the *San Francisco Call* highlighted Emily Hart and Dolly Wallace for specific praise and commented that the players were likely to improve with practice and age.[97] Similarly, the *San Francisco Call*'s report on the second match mentioned a 'rough-and-tumble game of football' won by the San Francisco Grays 10-6. It, too, praised Emily Hart and Dolly Wallace whose play 'was especially good and was responsible for the victory'.[98]

Despite some evidence of newspapers' positive responses, the occasional inclusion of stereotypes demonstrated broader press concern about women playing physical sports. For example, in 1896, the *San Francisco Examiner* reported on an intercollegiate women's basketball match between Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley by masculinising the players. The article stated that players 'accepted knocks and falls with equanimity of real men' and that 'there were no symptoms of hair pulling'.[99] These comments reminded readers of the participants' gender and the fact that the women were not behaving in a way that readers would

[94] 'Football? Some Said Tiddlewinks', 10; 'Football in Bloomers', 5.
[95] 'Football? Some Said Tiddlewinks', 10.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] 'Frisco Grays Victorious', 6.
[99] 'Waterloo for Berkeley Girls', *San Francisco Examiner*, 5 April 1896, 11.

have expected, both in not pulling their opponents' hair and playing a physical sport. In referring to the players as men, the journalist suggested that they were behaving inappropriately for their gender. This trope of women pulling one another's hair, as already mentioned in reports of a game at Gustavus Adolphus College and a photograph that accompanied stories of the games in Cavour, South Dakota, was also evident in articles about the games in San Francisco. The *San Francisco Call* stated that in training, the girls 'have made such good progress that already the players have learned that hair-pulling is not one of the essential points of the game'.[100] Similarly, the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared, '[c]ontrary to the confirmed masculine superstition, there was no hair-pulling.'[101] While reporters keenly noted that the women did not pull one another's hair, such references still reminded the sports page's mostly male readers of women's stereotypical behaviour as a form of amusement.

Articles' accompanying drawings (Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2, and Figure 4.3) also incorporated stereotypes to amuse readers about the prospect of female football players. For example, two *San Francisco Call* cartoons (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2) referenced women pulling one another's hair.[102] Indeed, the focus on women's long hair established an orthodox femininity that the reporter may have felt was otherwise lacking. Jaime Schultz's work on American women's sport discusses how the ponytail has become synonymous with female athletes and how it 'engender[s] a normative, athletic femininity'.[103] The seated female player in Figure 4.1 also represented what the artist assumed sports page readers' idealised vision of women was, with her narrow waist and accentuated bust. She was drawn dressed in regulation football uniform, with

[100] 'Girls to Line Up on the Gridiron', 8.
[101] 'Bloomer Girls Kicked Pigskin and Sowed the Ground with Hairpins', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 December 1897, 21.
[102] 'Girls to Line Up on the Gridiron', *San Francisco Call*, 21 December 1897, 8; 'Football? Some Said Tiddlewinks', 10.
[103] Schultz, *Qualifying Times*, 8.

little skin on display which consequently did not sexualise her in the same way as *National Police Gazette* drawings. The picture has some similarities to the 'heroine' depicted in Figure 3.1 as both artists portrayed the women in full football attire, with curvaceous figures, and a ball under one of their arms. Figure 4.2 depicted other stereotypes, including a female player's concern over what she looked like in her uniform. The caption 'the coming woman was in evidence' referenced the famous Coming Game image, yet accompanied the drawing of an unskilled player.[104] Thus, the artist made a social comment about women's increasing influence, even doubting the New Woman's arrival. Similarly, the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s cartoon (Figure 4.3) also highlighted players' hair pulling, and their concern over their appearances, as one player asks a male bystander for a hairpin.[105] The cartoon contrasted what the artist considered 'The Ideal' of a glamorous, slim woman confidently holding a football with one not able to catch. This drawing was clearly for comedic effect and emphasised stereotypes about female sporting ability. As Linda Behling notes, '[m]asculine women, and for that matter, feminine men, were considered sexual "inverts" ' and masculine tendencies would make females more likely to partake in high-risk behaviour.[106] Consequently, highlighting these stereotypes could help reduce readers' concerns over the players' possible sexual deviancy. These images provide evidence of Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory, where 'the woman's body has to be controlled and inserted into the social order'.[107] The fact that the women conformed to traditional feminine stereotypes, and football's established gender order, would amuse readers and reassure them that the players posed no threat to football's masculine space. Figure

[104] 'Ballet Deserts the Stage for the Gridiron', *San Francisco Call*, 26 December 1897, 10.
[105] 'Bloomer Girls Kicked Pigskin', 21.
[106] Laura Behling, *The Masculine Woman in America, 1890-1935* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 25.
[107] Anneke Smelik, 'Lara Croft, Kill Bill, and the Battle for Theory in Feminist Film Studies', in *Doing Gender in Media, Art, and Culture*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris Van Der Tuin (London: Routledge, 2007), 181.

4.2 shows ‘experts’ confused by the game and other male spectators laughing at the women, drawings that frame the depiction of the players and highlight the match’s novelty value.


GIRLS TO LINE UP ON THE GRIDIRON.

A NOVELTY IN FOOTBALL.

San Franciscans are soon to enjoy an innovation in football. The game has been exemplified by college students and athletes time and time again in many hard-fought contests on local gridirons, but lovers of the great hospital-recruiting game have never yet had a chance to see fair femininity interpret its intricacies. Baseball games in which teams of the gentler sex have struggled for supremacy have been played in plenty, but football is yet to receive its initial presentation at their hands.

Here is a splendid opportunity, which Colonel T. Peacherino (so called because he is a "good thing") Robinson has overlooked, and it has been left to Messrs.

Merle Johnson.

Figure 4.1: ‘Girls to Line Up on the Gridiron.’

Figure 4.2: 'Ballet Deserts the Stage for the Gridiron.'

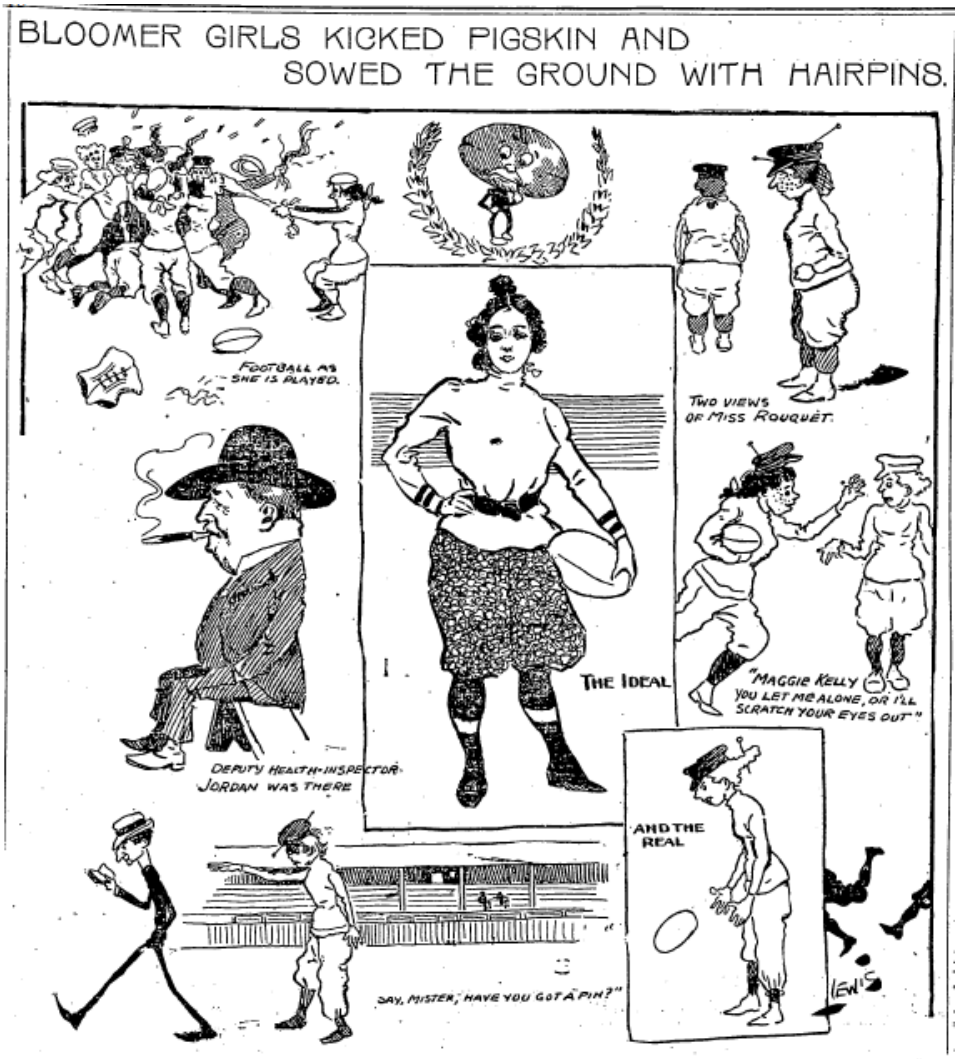

Figure 4.3: 'Bloomer Girls Kicked Pigskin and Sowed the Ground With Hairpins.'

Newspaper reports questioned these female football players' respectability, reflecting societal concerns that women who played in front of men for pay were immoral, perhaps even sexually promiscuous.[108] Shattuck notes that the 'late-nineteenth-century female professional baseball players … had more in common with theatrical performers of the same era than they did with the women who organized pick-up teams and civic

[108] Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, 80.

teams'.[109] The link between sportswomen and the theatre was also true of the young women who played football in San Francisco. For example, both the *San Francisco Call* and *San Francisco Chronicle* journalists remarked that the players were primarily individuals who performed in ballet and variety. The *San Francisco Chronicle* provided more detail and stated that some of the players had performed in 'Christmas ballets', events that resembled pantomimes that were popular at the time in England and the United States.[110] During the late nineteenth century, the American middle class 'condemned … ballet girls as little better than whores, and even questioned the moral effect on viewers of attending a ballet performance'.[111] In mentioning the players' backgrounds, journalists hinted at the women's promiscuity. Therefore, readers and spectators would not have considered these women respectable, even before they began to play football. According to Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister

> people working in the entertainment business, e.g. in a circus or in a vaudeville show, live in a world which does not function according to the rules of the mainstream society .... Within such an environment, girls and women are not considered as the 'weak sex' which has to be protected.[112]

These attitudes towards women working in show business may explain why the players in San Francisco were able to take part in the violent sport of football. These women were not respectable; consequently, their public participation in a masculine sport was more acceptable than for women from other occupations and classes.

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[109] Ibid., 5.
[110] 'Bloomer Girls Kicked Pigskin', 21; 'A Christmas Ballet', *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, 19 December 1897, 4.
[111] Nancy Ruyter, 'American Delsartism: Precursor of an American Dance Art', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 13 (2009): 2016.
[112] Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister, 'Women Boxers: Actresses to Athletes – The Role of Vaudeville in Early Women's Boxing in the USA' *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1911.

Thirty-six years later, when the league in Toledo emerged, the local newspaper praised the female players for their skill, while local organisations articulated contemporary pedagogical and medical concerns about young women playing football. For example, the *Toledo Blade* provided most of the reports on this league and the journalists accepted these games and frequently praised the players, referring to Leona Ruth Wylinski as a 'triple threat player' and Ursulla Ollivier as 'a speedy broken field runner'.[113] An additional article praised the players and stated that 'several of the girls have shown exceptional ability'.[114] The teams played their first game, won by the East Side Girls 19-0, in front of 3,000 spectators on 3 December 1933, and reporters considered it the city championship. The *Toledo Blade* praised Wylinski, who scored all three touchdowns, and the journalist reported that the girls 'turned in some vicious tackling'. The rest of the report, which the editor placed on the second page of the sports section, described how the players scored the points.[115] The article differed very little from those about male games with a description of how the game unfolded and a statement of the players' names: this included each player's forename and surname, which was the *Toledo Blade*'s reporting convention for both genders. Four days later, the *Toledo Blade* stated that the West Toledo team was preparing for a second game and working on new plays and formations daily.[116] A *Toledo Blade* article the following day emphasised that the players practised daily, reporting that both teams had 'come through their daily practice session in good condition'.[117] This emphasis on practice may have encouraged more spectators to attend than would have gone to a game that was purely a novelty. The *Toledo Blade* expected a battle between the two

[113] 'Girls on Grid', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 25 November 1933, S1.
[114] 'Girl Gridders Hold Workout', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 28 November 1933, 18.
[115] 'East Side Girls Defeat West Side', 19.
[116] 'Girl Gridders Plan Defense', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 8 December 1933, 31.
[117] 'Girls' Eleven Come Together', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 9 December 1933, 11.

quarterbacks following their 'splendid showing' the previous weekend.[118] The article also praised the 'brilliant playing' of some of the substitutes in the last game. The journalist noted that the replacements' performances led coaches to delay announcing the starters for the next match as they considered whether those players should be in the opening line-up. The report on the second game, which the East Side team won 18-0, had many of the same characteristics as the first. As with other articles, the report was primarily concerned with how the players scored, but it also mentioned that the 'slippery football and treacherous footing' meant that the plays were not as 'spectacular' as in the previous match.[119] These reports were not part of highly gendered sports pages; they appeared in regular sports sections amongst articles about male football games and other sports, and there were no references to the players' attractiveness.

Despite these positive articles, one report of the Toledo league articulated some press concern about female participation in such a masculine sport. This article demonstrates what Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford note about male journalists in the 1930s who 'often seemed far more interested in how female athletes looked than in how they played', partly as a result of concern over female athletes' sexuality.[120] For example, on 23 October 1933, the *Toledo Blade* reported on a 'feminine scrimmage' at Dolgin Field held in preparation for a 'lipstick conference' that would begin in the autumn. The author referred to 'another preserve once sacred to the male' falling before 'a feminine invasion'.[121] However, this was the only article that expressed such displeasure. The report's accompanying photograph showed Bernece Kaspner in long trousers, a long-

[118] Ibid.
[119] 'East Toledo Girls' Champs', 19.
[120] Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*, 58.
[121] 'Girl Tries Football', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 23 October 1933, 21.

sleeved shirt, and appropriate footwear, and did not sexualise her in any way.[122] Therefore, while the photographer depicted Kaspner in the same way as a male player, the concomitant words reduced the female players to stereotypes and suggested that their presence on the gridiron was unwelcome.

While newspaper reports were mostly positive, newsreel footage provides the most persuasive evidence of Oriard's assertion that the media treated female players as novelties. In the build-up to the first game, a *Toledo Blade* article mentioned that a newsreel company applied to film the game due to 'the novelty of girls playing football … attracting attention outside Toledo'.[123] Unedited footage from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Film and Television archive shows two teams playing in Ohio.[124] A British Pathé newsreel included an edited version of the same footage, but with the addition of a British commentary. Mike Huggins' work on the representation of female soccer players in British newsreels states that they 'offered multiple readings … not least since [soccer] for many defined masculinity, and generally avoided sounding too approving. Indeed, much coverage remained patronising, critical or derogatory.'[125] This type of representation is evident in newsreels about female football players in the United States, including in Toledo.

The footage from Toledo reveals that the match the women played was regulation football, but the director contrasted the game's physicality with an emphasis on the players' stereotypical feminine behaviour. The film reveals details of the style of play as well as audience reaction and includes shots of male and female spectators cheering in

[122] Ibid.
[123] 'Girl Gridders Perform Here', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 30 November 1933, 23.
[124] Girls Football Team in East and West Battle, Ohio, VA12490 M, Hearst Newsreels Collection, UCLA Film and Television Archive, Los Angeles, California.
[125] Mike Huggins, '"And Now, Something for the Ladies": Representations of Women's Sport in Cinema Newsreels 1918-1939', *Women's History Review* 16, no. 5 (2007): 693.

the crowd. All of the players were wearing helmets, and the game was full contact including tackling and the usual 11-a-side format. One shot shows two men on the side of the pitch, which could be the aforementioned coaches, and one man joins in during the coin toss with the captains and two male referees. At the end of the sequence, a player turns to the camera, putting on her helmet and applying makeup, as she smiles awkwardly down the lens. Amy Godoy-Pressland states that women in typically male sports 'more frequently engage in the use of feminine beauty practices in order to appear less masculine' because of the male gaze.[126] Similarly, Jan Wright and Gill Clarke state that 'female athletes negotiate the contractions of athlete/male … by taking on heterosexual markers of attraction'.[127] While the player may have usually behaved in this way, it is more likely that the director staged the shot as the player looks uncomfortable as she smiles. This image displays characteristics of Mulvey's gaze theory, where fetishizing the female body makes it ' "safe" for the enjoyment of the male gaze'.[128] While the director did not sexualise the player, her stereotypical behaviour would reassure viewers that she was not a real threat to the hyper-masculine sport.

The commentary on the British Pathé newsreel provides evidence of Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects and infantilization. For example, the reporter referred to the women by their first names, highlighting their gender, but also indicating an over-familiarity that 'can be interpreted as infantilizing/disrespectful'.[129] The narrator also

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[126] Amy Godoy-Pressland, '"No Hint of Bulging Muscles": The Surveillance of Sportswomen's Bodies in British Print Media', *Journalism* 17, no. 6 (2016): 754.
[127] Jan Wright and Gill Clarke, 'Sport, the Media and the Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality: A Case Study of Women's Rugby Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 3 (1999): 234.
[128] Sohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 38.
[129] Anastasiya Khomutova and Alex Channon, 'Legends in Lingerie: Sexuality and Athleticism in the 2013 Legends Football League US Season', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 32, no. 2 (2015): 170.

remarked on players' appearances, including how Hazel 'had her hair waved for this match, and she looks just *too* stunning'.[130] The end of the footage has the same shot as the UCLA film of the player putting on her makeup with the addition of the phrase 'no touchdown, but just to wind up a little touch-up'.[131] The newsreel's tone is not judgmental, and it does not suggest that young women should not be playing football. It was important for newsreel producers not to offend the audience, and they experienced commercial pressure to ensure that the public enjoyed what they saw, hence a lack of too many disparaging remarks.[132] Significantly, the references to female names in the commentary do not match the names on line-ups listed in the *Toledo Blade*. The newsreel mentions players Martha, Hazel, Mary, Virginia, Ada, and Elsie, yet apart from Mary, none of the other names appear in newspaper reports of the games. The use of incorrect names suggests that the commentator was unfamiliar with the event, and he perhaps used what he considered particularly feminine names to increase amusement. The fact that the reporter spoke in an upper class, southern English accent, and referred to the sport's similarities to rugby, indicates international interest in this story. Other vignettes in the same British Pathé canister include record-breaking Australian pilots, an obstacle cycling race from Switzerland, and the latest streamlined train from the United States, further demonstrating the newsreel's international appeal.[133]

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[130] British Pathé, 'Women Battle on the Gridiron AKA Lady's Rugby Match', http://www.britishpathe.com/video/women-battle-on-gridiron-aka-ladys-rugby-match/query/women+american+football (accessed 30 October 2016).
[131] British Pathé, 'Women Battle on the Gridiron AKA Lady's Rugby Match', http://www.britishpathe.com/video/women-battle-on-gridiron-aka-ladys-rugby-match/query/women+american+football (accessed 30 October 2016).
[132] Mike Huggins, 'Projecting the Visual: British Newsreels, Soccer and Popular Culture 1918-39', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 24, no. 1 (2007): 85.
[133] British Pathé, 'Cannister 34/89', https://www.britishpathe.com/search/canister_no/34+89 (accessed 16 October 2019).

The style of the commentary in these newsreels is similar to other British Pathé reports about women's sport. While the examples below are from Australia and England, they are all British Pathé newsreels, which suggests that editors sought to emphasise humour when reporting on women's sport regardless of location. The commentator on a 1933 newsreel about women playing rugby in Australia made remarks similar to those in the reports of female football matches, including 'nicely saved sir, er madam', and 'whoa this isn't a bargain sale' when observing the players' roughness. While the commentator referred to most players by their numbers, he called one participant Sylvia, further evidence that infantilization was a standardised element of such reports.[134] Similarly, a 1943 newsreel containing a soccer game between the 'Bright Sparks' and the 'Great Guns' referred to women by their first names and included a shot of women powdering their noses.[135] Commentators made comparable jokes when women took part in individual sports as well as team sports. For example, the voiceover in 1933 footage of women's athletics of a woman bending over stated, 'some of them are very forward, while others are very much behind'.[136] This comment drew attention to the women's bodies rather than their athletic achievement, ensuring that the viewers did not see them as real sportswomen. These films of women's football matches were not unusual; they revealed producers' need for amusing stories but not offend viewers.

While newspaper reports praised the Toledo players for their ability and skill, several reports echoed educators' anxiety about women taking part in competitive activities. In the 1930s, 'charging admission or encouraging spectators to attend games was

[134] British Pathé, 'Cannister 33/84', https://www.britishpathe.com/video/soccer-cricket-perhaps-but-rugby-well-girls/query/womens+rugby (accessed 8 January 2020).
[135] British Pathé, 'Cannister NSP 404', https://www.britishpathe.com/video/womens-football-issue-title-is-swing-time/query/womens+football (accessed 8 January 2020).
[136] British Pathé, 'Cannister PT 222', https://www.britishpathe.com/video/speed-eves-1/query/womens+rugby (accessed: 8 January 2020).

inadmissible, and … high level competition emphasising winning was undesirable'.[137] These concerns arose at the same time as those about professionalism in collegiate football that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's investigation into college athletics highlighted. The report emphasised the Foundation's concerns about universities' use of professional coaches, the emphasis on competition, the high levels of publicity for players, as well as the 'system of recruiting and subsidising'.[138] Similar concern was evident in reports about the Toledo league. For example, in January 1934 the *Toledo Blade* reported that the Toledo Federation of Women's Clubs objected to professional football for women because of organisers' possible exploitation of the players as well as the sacrifice of the 'health and dignity of womanhood'.[139] A month later, the same newspaper reported that the Toledo Council of Catholic Women protested against girls' football games as well as young women who played basketball against boys. The Council believed that sports were dangerous to the players' 'physical and moral welfare'. Amongst their chief concerns were sports that were identical to boys, potentially exhausting games (especially in public), and activities coached by men, all of which were present in Toledo.[140]

Not all concerns were about the impact of the sport's physicality on the players. For example, the *New York Herald Tribune*'s Janet Owen's apprehension about the league was that 'the purpose is exploitation for the sake of money and publicity'.[141] Owen worried that 'the girls [were] too young to have developed the wisdom to stand by whatever health principles they might have formulated in the face of a call to the

[137] Fidler, *The Origins and History*, 19.
[138] Howard Savage, Harold Bentley, John McGovern, and Dean Smiley, *American College Athletics* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1929), xiv.
[139] 'Federation Hits at Exploiting Girls in Sport', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 11 January 1934, 12.
[140] 'Too Strenuous Athletics for Girls Opposed', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 23 January 1934, 7.
[141] Janet Owen, 'Sports Among Women', *New York Herald Tribune*, 13 June 1934, 25.

professional banner to “put on a good show” ’.[142] The Chamber of Commerce’s concern about Toledo’s reputation was evident in June 1934 when they wrote to the city council requesting that ‘legal steps be taken to curb the practice’ of girls’ football. Their primary concern was that Toledo had received negative publicity because of the games, not that the sport was inappropriate for young women.[143] In addition to the other complaints, the Women’s Athletic Section of the APEA wrote to ‘a dozen civic, social, and industrial organisations’ to protest the league.[144] These groups included ‘the Toledo Chamber of Commerce, Board of Education, Parents Teachers’ Association, Federation of Women’s Clubs, Commission of Recreation, Toledo Medical Association, Retail Merchants’ Association and other groups’.[145] In April 1934, the Commissioner of Recreation for the City Welfare Department and Directors of Physical Education wrote to the local school board protesting the recruitment of high school girls for these teams.[146] The Board of Education felt the football games were ‘detrimental to the health of the girls’, but they had no authority over the events because they were ‘entirely outside school activities’.[147] The morality of young women playing in public was a definite concern for educators, reflecting the same pedagogical anxieties articulated in Chapter 3.

Reports about the Los Angeles league did not contain the same concerns over the exploitation of players, reflecting women’s increasing political and sporting opportunities in the late 1930s. S.J. Kleinberg states that ‘by the 1940s women had

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[142] Ibid.
[143] ‘C. of C. Asks Council to Ban Girls’ Pro Football Game’, *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 27 June 1934, 3.
[144] Owen, ‘Sports Among Women’, 25.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Board of Education minutes, 16 April 1934, 311 Box 25, Toledo Federation of Teachers archive, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.
[147] ‘School Board Hopes to Prevent Girls’ Football’, *Mansfield News-Journal* (Mansfield, OH), 28 April 1934, 8; Board of Education minutes, 16 April 1934, 311 Box 25, Toledo Federation of Teachers archive, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

finally been elected to the Senate as well as the House of Representatives'.[148] Women also made up 44.4 per cent of seven of the New Deal agencies, 'including the Social Security Board, the Works Progress Administration, and the Home Owner's Loan Corporation'.[149] In sport, educators from Ohio State University proposed creating a female version of the National Collegiate Athletic Association as well as a national golf tournament for college women.[150] The league in Los Angeles also coincided with the 1939 publication of Jack Spaulding's *American Football for Women: Official Rules*. Spaulding dedicated the book to American women 'to develop a healthful and safe sport which will promote the physical well-being, alertness and sportsmanship'.[151] The book contained rules, which were mostly the same as the male game, and provided information on the field layout. As such, the league emerged at a time when at least one author and his publisher believed the sport was appropriate for women, and some educators increased pressure for more competitive opportunities for female college students.

Reports about the 1939 Los Angeles league, like those in Toledo, extensively praised the players for their football ability, including their physicality, and did not treat them as novelties. For example, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a match between the Marshall and Clampett De Soto's and the Chet Relph Chevrolets that took place in October 1939 in front of 2,500 fans in Gilmore Stadium. The reporter called the players 'stars' and praised Jan Wood, 'the outstanding guard of the game' who 'ripped the light

[148] Kleinberg, *Women in the United States*, 296.
[149] Sarah Jane Deutsch, 'From Ballots to Breadlines: 1920-1940', in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 458.
[150] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 139.
[151] Jack Spaulding, *American Football for Women: Official Rules* (San Francisco: A.G. Spalding and Bros., 1939), n.p.

De Soto line apart'.[152] The same report also mentioned that 'the De Sotos fielded brilliant tacklers in Blazek, Mary Zivelic and Leaty Louise' and that 'Muggs Higham at right end and Al Berry in the backfield were other stars'.[153] Similarly, the *Journal-Times Sunday Bulletin* called Bubbles Bressie the 'triple threat quarterback of the Hollywood Stars'.[154] Articles before the second game praised Lois Roberts, 'the barefoot wonder, who punts, runs, tackles and generally runs rampant'.[155] The *Medford Mail Tribune* similarly praised Roberts, and stated that her 50-yard punt was 'a distance commendable in any college game'.[156] The fact that newspapers emphasised the players' football skills and did not refer to stereotypes such as hair pulling or use of makeup contradicts Oriard's statement that newspapers reported on the women as novelties.

Some journalists' sensationalist columns exhibited extreme reactions to the Los Angeles league, but these were not widely held opinions. For example, in August 1939, Les Hegele, in his 'Rounding Up State Sports' column for the *Arizona Republic*, mentioned the league's formation stating, '[h]ere's hoping that my bunch of boys don't ever have to get their hair pulled in a football game in the near future.'[157] Dick Hyland, in a similar column in the *Los Angeles Times*, commented that 'biting and scratching are considered a faux pas, especially if an official is looking'. Hyland's column also focused on the players' attractiveness, including a reference to Lois Terry as the 'Platinum Blond Terror' and "Bubbles" Bressie as the 'short, peppery blond with oodles

[152] 'De Soto Girls' Eleven Wins', 10.
[153] Ibid.
[154] 'Kicking Attraction in This Loop', *Journal-Times Sunday Bulletin* (Racine, WI), 29 October 1939, 6.
[155] 'Famed Girl Softballers to Play Here', *Desert Sun* (Palm Springs, CA), 3 November 1939, 11.
[156] 'Strange As It Seems', *Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, OR), 24 December 1939, 8.
[157] Les Hegele, 'Rounding up State Sports', *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), 20 August 1939, S2.

of personality'.[158] He finished by declaring, 'I don't know what all of this feminine activity is supposed to prove in the world of sports. In fact, I'm wondering if the report of it doesn't belong on the entertainment pages or over with the crime news', hinting that women playing football should be illegal.[159] Oriard notes that this column was the most extreme response he had seen towards the female players, but that Hyland's 'outrage was directed less at Amazon athletes than at their desecration of football as the pure essence of masculinity'.[160] One further derogatory article came from Art Cohn's report on the outcome of a charity game played between teams that he referred to as the 'two leading moll's elevens in Los Angeles'.[161] The use of the term 'moll' has clear disparaging and sexual overtones. Claire Potter's work on gun molls in the 1930s states that the word 'references rich histories of criminality and sexuality' and that before the twentieth century, molls were 'either an independent sex worker or a resident of a disorderly house'.[162] Cohn's column aimed to amuse readers: his style was evident in an introductory advertisement in the *Oakland Tribune* in September 1936 which referred to readers' opportunity 'to begin reading and enjoying the "Cohn-Ing Tower" as only Art Cohn can entertain you'.[163] These columns' purpose for entertainment, and therefore not serious sports reporting, explains why these reactions were atypical to most articles. These authors' remarks provide evidence of Bruce's rules of non-sport-related aspects and sexualisation through their references to players' appearances and calling them molls. In all of these cases, these male authors appear

[158] Dick Hyland, 'Behind the Line', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 October 1939, 12.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Oriard, *King Football*, 362.
[161] Art Cohn, 'Cohn-Ing Tower', *Oakland Tribune*, 19 December 1939, 21.
[162] Claire Bond Potter, '"I'll Go the Limit and Then Some": Gun Molls, Desire, and Danger in the 1930s', *Feminist Studies* 21, no. 1 (1995): 44.
[163] 'Cohn-Ing Tower', *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), 5 September 1936, 8.

concerned about women taking over a sport that, in their opinions, only men should play.

Although the written reports were mostly positive, accompanying photographs occasionally emphasised the Los Angeles league's players' appearances and implied a novelty value. These pictures demonstrated the 'sense of threatened manhood [that] lay just beneath the surface of many media portrayals of women's sport'.[164] For example, a photograph and brief caption in the *Santa Ana Daily Register* focused on Chet Relph Chevrolet players in the huddle, wearing regulation football trousers, with their backsides in the middle of the frame. The caption declared, 'Posteriors pictured here are not those of brawny he football collegians, but of players in Southern California's new "Powderpuff League" '.[165] While the players were wearing appropriate football clothing, the accompanying comment and emphasis on their backsides objectified the women by focusing on their bodies and not their skills.

Some photographs of the women provide evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence, where reports juxtapose the athlete's sporting ability with references to feminine attributes. One way that the photographs of the Los Angeles league demonstrated the rule was through contrasting captions. For example, the description accompanying the *Pottstown Mercury*'s photograph of players gathering around a clipboard stated that they were 'in a makeup huddle', despite no evidence of beauty products in the picture.[166] Similarly, the *Journal-Times*, in a four-line caption to a photograph of Bressie kicking (Figure 4.4), referred to a forthcoming match in the Los Angeles league as a

[164] Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 209.
[165] 'Powderpuff League in Huddle', *Santa Ana Daily Register* (Santa Ana, CA), 23 October 1939, 6.
[166] 'Grid Gals in Huddle', *Pottstown Mercury* (Pottstown, PA), 24 October 1939, 8.

'powderpuff' game.[167] The picture showed her in a kicking pose but did not emphasise her waist or bust, and the side on angle meant it did not look up her legs as a front-facing photograph would have done. Oriard commented on these pictures of female players kicking, noting that 'the similarity between a show-girl's and a punter's high kicks made photos of young women in this pose irresistible to sports editors, but these served only as amusement or mild titillation'.[168] There is a hint of these characteristics in the photograph of Bressie as the camera angle from the ground looks up her bare legs. However, newspapers often pictured male football players in the same pose, and another photograph on the same page showed Jim Blumenstock, a Fordham fullback, also kicking.[169] The picture of Bressie showed her wearing a helmet, upper body pads, and a sweatshirt, but she was wearing shorts, a contrast to Blumenstock who wore long trousers. Thus, the newspaper depicted the two players in different ways: Bressie and Blumenstock are both football players, yet the newspaper has sexualised one more than the other. In treating Bressie this way, the suggestion was that the female player is a novelty.

[167] 'Kicking Attraction in this Loop', 6.
[168] Oriard, *King Football*, 355.
[169] 'Kicking Attraction in this Loop', 6.

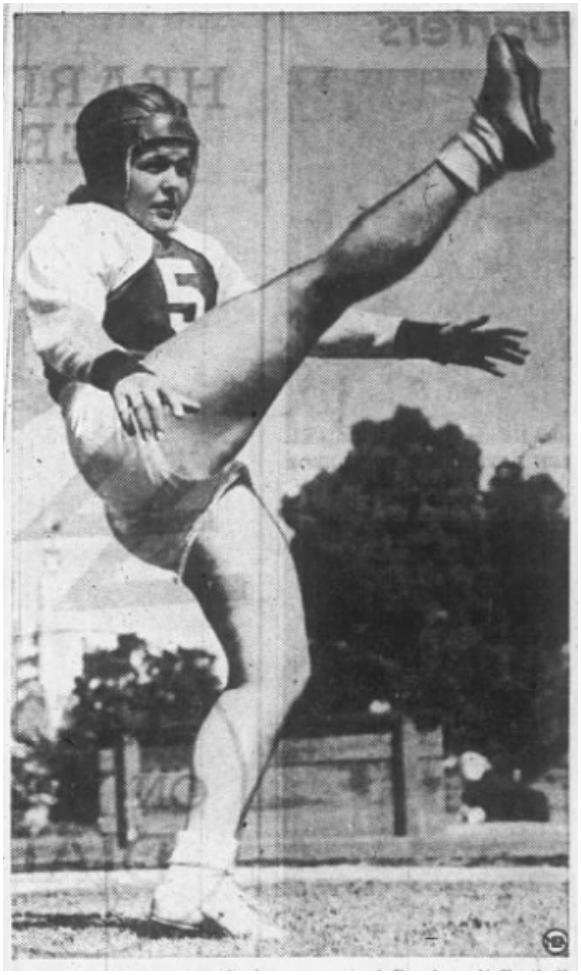

Figure 4.4: ‘Kicking Attraction in this Loop’.

Another way that photographs of the Los Angeles league provide evidence of Bruce’s rule of ambivalence is in the contrasting images within reports. Editors frequently included pictures of players in action accompanied by those that emphasised their bodies. For example, two separate articles focused on photographs of Dorothy Doerr, a Hollywood Stars player. The *Decatur Herald* included a picture of Doerr walking to her high school classes as well as one of her changing into her football uniform.[170] The pictures of her changing had a hint of titillation in her state of semi-undress. An *Appleton Post-Crescent* article included a photograph of her putting on her uniform and

[170] ‘Glamor on Pacific Coast Gridirons’, 5.

practising kicking, juxtaposing her skills with an emphasis on her body.[171] In both cases, the images reduce Doerr's threat to the masculine sport; she not only conformed to an appropriate role for women but also became an object of the male gaze as she connotes the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' that Mulvey articulated.[172] Both articles emphasised Doerr's prettiness and that she was the sister of a Boston Red Sox player. The *Decatur Herald* editor placed the picture of Doerr changing on an entertainment page just above listings for films. The *Post-Crescent*'s editor put their pictures of Doerr on a sports page, with the photograph of her half-dressed above the one of her kicking. In placing the images this way, the emphasis is on her body rather than her skill. In both cases, editors put the photographs at the very top of the page. The *Decatur Herald* had only one other picture on the page, one that was half the size of those of Doerr. In the *Post-Crescent* it was the page's only photograph. Consequently, pictures of female football players were clearly important to editors and frequently dominated a page. This positioning suggests that visual representations played a central role in the narratives surrounding women's football.

It is in magazines, with their emphasis on entertainment, where evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence is most apparent. For example, in November 1939, *Life* published a three-page report of the game between the 'Marshall Clampett Amazons' and the 'Chet Relph Hollywood Stars'.[173] The first two pages included action shots of the game, an image of the referee signalling a touchdown as players piled over the line, and Jan Wood in kicking practice. While these initial photographs did not highlight the players' body shapes and were similar to those in reports of male games, the picture on the

[171] 'Glamour on the Gridiron', 14.
[172] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.
[173] 'Girls' Football: These Husky Californians Play a Rough, Tough, Regulation Game', *Life*, 13 November 1939, 80.

following page sexualised Mary Zivelic. The photographer captured the image from behind as if Zivelic was about to snap the ball. How the photographer depicted the player, with her peering between her legs, made this a sexually suggestive pose. The picture exemplifies the male gaze as 'the camera endlessly lingers on the spectacle of female beauty'.[174] The photograph further emphasised the idea of sexual display because she was wearing tight shorts rather than the regulation uniform. Another similar picture on the same page was of a semi-dressed player putting on her uniform. The small paragraph accompanying the photographs mentioned that the women played 'a rough, tough regulation game' and 'it was no powder-puff battle'.[175] *Life*'s presentation of the women in this way demonstrated the magazine's aim for satire and humour and was not necessarily representative of all opinions.[176]

Click magazine, the self-titled 'National Picture Monthly', echoed *Life*'s approach and similarly demonstrated Bruce's rule of ambivalence with contrasting images of gameplay and an emphasis on players' appearances. One picture was of the game in progress, another showed Bressie kicking the ball, again wearing shorts rather than long trousers, and a third was of the two teams facing each other on the line of scrimmage. The final photograph was of two players applying their makeup while dressed in their football uniform. Most of the pictures focused on the women's playing ability, but the magazine made some concessions to amuse and titillate its readers. The journalist's concern at the prospect of girls playing football was evident in the comment, 'followers of the wasp-waisted corset openly declare it is a dastardly plot

[174] Godoy-Pressland, 'No Hint of Bulging Muscles', 749.
[175] 'Girls' Football: These Husky Californians', 80.
[176] Martha Patterson, 'Ise Gwine ter Give You Gals What Straddle: Edward Kemble', in *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha Patterson (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 80.

against their campaign for the revival of the hour-glass figure'.[177] Despite this statement, the author was impressed by the fact the players 'suffer[ed] bumps, bruises, bloody noses and scratches, but they always come up for more'.[178] The report contrasted praise with a need to highlight that the women remained respectable in the readers' eyes. *Click*'s presentation of the players in this way is clear evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence with the juxtaposition of emphasising their skill with their physical attractiveness.

Newsreel footage of the Los Angeles league had some similarities to that from Toledo but was more positive and contained less of an emphasis on female beauty. The first game between the De Sotos and the Chevrolets appeared on a 1939 British Pathé newsreel released on 20 November. The commentator stated that the game was a 'Powder Bowl Classic' played to professional rules at Gilmore Stadium.[179] The film included a focus on the players' looks as the reporter enthused over 'four quarters of feminine football', the fact the players wore 'chic pullover jerseys', and that 'Shirley Payne [was] tipped on her hairdo' when tackled.[180] The commentary juxtaposed this emphasis on the players' attractiveness with comments that the young women played 'a rough and rugged football' by 'professional rules'. The commentator also states that the players were 'well-trained' and 'expertly coached'. Unlike in the Toledo footage, there were no shots of players applying makeup or winking at the camera and the film contained far fewer stereotypes. The same newsreel also included footage of the Royal Engineers demonstrating their latest equipment, British troops arriving in France, dogfights between French and German aircraft, the Polish Prime Minister's visit to

[177] 'Ladies of the Gridiron: A He-Man Sport Suffers a Powder Puff Invasion', *Click*, January 1940, 32.
[178] Ibid.
[179] British Pathé, 'Football Amazons', http://www.britishpathe.com/video/football-amazons/query/women+american+football (accessed 30 October 2016).
[180] Ibid.

England, and footage of a Wales versus England football match.[181] The women's football game was thus the light relief in a newsreel dominated by war news and 'serious' men's sport. Reporting the game in this way suggests that the editor considered women playing football amusing; they were to be laughed at and not taken too seriously.

It is in reports of the league in Chicago, and their accompanying photographs, that the most favourable coverage of women playing football in leagues is evident. This style of reporting reflects the changing role of women in wartime America. As Fidler notes, '[l]ike the workplace, the sporting world was also infiltrated by women during the war years. Here too, women assumed roles traditionally occupied by men'.[182] Examples included the development of the All-American Girls' Softball League (later the AAGPBL) which 'while novel, did not appear fatuous in relation to the prevailing social circumstances necessitated by war. It was logical, in the projected absence of men.'[183] While women took on male jobs during the war, they 'were glamorised in images and words'.[184] Images of Rosie the Riveter that graced magazine covers and posters exemplified what Nancy Bouchier and Marla Steiner contend was part of a state propaganda campaign of 'carefully constructed images of female bodies in motion, working to define what was socially appropriate in the context of war'.[185] League organisers' efforts to maintain women's femininity is evident in a report about the Chicago league that mentioned that Flynn insisted players kept their fingernails short

[181] British Pathé, 'Cannister 39/91', https://www.britishpathe.com/search/canister_no/39+91 (accessed 16 October 2019).
[182] Fidler, *The Origins and History*, 33.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 46.
[185] Nancy Bouchier and Marla Steiner, 'The Politics of the Physical: American Female Physical Educators and the US Army Air Forces at War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, no. 1 (1994): 1.

because, as he stated, 'girls will be girls'.[186] Flynn further suggested that the league would have to meet 'their [the players'] demands for fashionable outfits'. These comments reduced these young women to feminine stereotypes, but they may also have increased the number of spectators who wanted to see only attractive women play football.

A further way of encouraging spectators to watch these women's games was to ensure that the players were physically able enough to play the sport well. The *Indianapolis Star* emphasised that the players needed a sporting background, and the league had clear guidelines on the physical attributes the women needed, they had to weigh 140 pounds or more and be five feet inches or taller.[187] The retrospective application of current body mass index (BMI) calculations reveals that these measurements equated to a BMI of 23.2 with 25 being the top end of healthy and 18.5 the lower end. These women were at the higher end of the ideal weight for their height, and thus better able to withstand the sport's forces.

Articles about the 1941 league in Chicago indicate little interest from journalists in its formation and activities. The *Escanaba Daily Press* published a piece about the festival on 6 July 1941 simply stating that '[m]any of the attractions were put on between halves of the woman's football game at Marble Athletic Field.'[188] A half-page article about the festival published on 8 July in the same newspaper did not refer to the football game at all. The report mentioned the dedication of a golf course, a display by a world champion fly-caster, and the decision that Gladstone would host the next

[186] 'So Pro Football Has Come To This!', 15.
[187] 'Plans Announced Here', 16.
[188] 'Thousands Gather Here For Glorious Fourth', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 6 July 1941, 13.

festival, but nothing on the football game.[189] The lack of any comment could indicate a paucity of interest in the league but also that the *Escanaba Daily Press* was unconcerned about women playing football. The *Muncie Morning Star* published a picture of Lilian Napier leaping over other football players but did not refer to the match that had just taken place, suggesting that the event was not the success that the promoters hoped.[190] Those attending a festival dedicated to outdoor pursuits may not have been the same people who wanted to see women play football. On 30 July 1941, Chicago's *Southtown Economist* provided details about a second scheduled football match. The article claimed that the main event of the 'annual homecoming and picnic of the police branch of the St. Jude league' would be a match between the Chicago Rockets and Chicago Bombers.[191] The event also included softball and horseshoe throwing, as well as dancing and dinner. Little evidence of the result of this football game, or any other details, exists. This shortage of articles about the results of these matches is in contrast to the other leagues where newspapers provided match reports with accompanying score lines. While this lack of press reporting suggests a dearth of interest in the women's games, the few articles that there are reveal that newspapers did not treat these matches as novelties, and the press appeared unconcerned about the league.

The photographs that editors included of the women in Chicago are mostly similar to pictures of male players, suggesting that they accepted the league and its participants. They also reveal that press attitudes towards women playing football were, by this time, becoming increasingly positive. There is little evidence of the ambivalence seen in the pictures of the Los Angeles league. For example, articles in the *Minneapolis Star* and

[189] 'Roleo-Festival Great Success; Golf Course Dedicated on Sunday', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 8 July 1941, 9.
[190] 'Female of the Species', *Muncie Morning Star* (Muncie, IN), 7 July 1941, 7.
[191] '3,000 Expected at St. Jude Outing', *Southtown Economist* (Chicago, IL), 30 July 1941, 6.

the *Evening Independent* included photographs of Irene Puckelwartz posing as if to throw the football and Tommy Lukso kicking the ball (Figure 4.5).[192] The *Evening Independent* editor placed the picture on the sports section's first page which is where readers found the most important stories, unlike the back page in UK newspapers. The *Minneapolis Star* editor included the photographs on a page dedicated to pictures of news stories. The same page had images of Muslims in Calcutta celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, Adolf Hitler meeting the Japanese foreign minister, and the story of a stricken British warplane.[193] These were stories of international importance, and the inclusion of the football photographs here suggests that the editor viewed this game as equally significant. This coverage also demonstrates that the league was gaining publicity outside Illinois. Similarly, the *Daily Mail* included a photograph of Napier leaping over players who were attempting to tackle her.[194] The picture is similar to those of male footballers, suggesting that newspapers treated these women the same way. The *Mansfield News-Journal* printed the same photograph as the only one on a page. The same picture also appeared in the *Escanaba Daily Press*, where the editor included only one other photograph, that of champion fly-caster Tony Accetta.[195] The same newspaper included a picture of Helen Klaus athletically jumping to make a catch, positioning it at the top of the middle column of the page.[196] These photographs provide little evidence of Mulvey's male gaze. The pictures do not demonstrate the fetish that Mulvey argued 'averts male fear of the female body'.[197] Photographers pictured the women as assertive and physically capable athletes, not

[192] 'They're Putting New Kick in Gridiron Game', 10; 'Man's Game? Ha!', *Minneapolis Star* (Minneapolis, MN), 25 April 1941, 40.
[193] 'Man's Game? Ha!', 40.
[194] 'Hey, You Guys (Pardon, Girls), It's Still Summer', *Daily Mail* (Hagerstown, MD), 12 June 1941, 8.
[195] 'Gosh, Gals, Take It Easy, It's Summer', *Mansfield News-Journal* (Mansfield, OH), 30 June 1941, 11; 'Over the Top', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 4 July 1941, 11.
[196] 'Rocketeer', *Escanaba Daily Press* (Escanaba, MI), 21 June 1941, 11.
[197] Godoy-Pressland, 'No Hint of Bulging Muscles', 749.

the ‘passive object of sexual desire’ that gaze theory proposes.[198] In all cases, the pictures showed the women wearing full football uniform and in similar poses to male players. That newspapers included such positive photographs suggests that editors believed their readers would accept female football players.

Figure 4.5: ‘They’re Putting New Kick in Gridiron Game’.

Comparing the photograph of Los Angeles player Bressie (Figure 4.4) kicking to the picture of Chicago player Lukso (Figure 4.5) further demonstrates that images of players became increasingly positive as the years progressed. The photograph of Lukso in a high kick pose had no sexual undertone at all. The picture showed her side-on, rather than in a titillating forward-facing pose, and she was wearing her football uniform including long trousers and pads, not shorts as Bressie wore.[199] This pose was

[198] Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.
[199] ‘They’re Putting New Kick in Gridiron Game’, 10.

a common stance for newspaper photographs of male players as illustrated by images of Ralph Heywood and Edgar Kenna in the same newspaper.[200] The fact that the photographer pictured her in full football uniform refutes the suggestion that editors included these pictures to titillate readers; there was no sexually suggestive pose or bare skin on display. With little space for photographs, editors chose to include images of female football players rather than male sports stars. This choice suggests that they believed pictures of women playing football were of greater interest to their readers, perhaps because of the novelty value. Of these six articles that included photographs, five were not on highly gendered pages but were part of regular sports sections surrounded by reports from baseball, boxing, football, golf, and other male sports. Pictures of these female football players in Chicago were important to newspapers, but editors presented them as physically assertive athletes, not as sexualised models. These photographs differ from those of female war workers, including Rosie the Riveter, whose depictions 'were overlaid with allusions to their stylish dress and attractive appearance', suggesting that photographers and editors did not view these football players in the same way.[201] These young women were not a threat to football's masculine space in the same way as female workers that threatened male jobs, and photographers did not need to emphasise their attractiveness to make their role appropriate.

Only one reaction to the Chicago league suggested that some journalists and editors were amused at the prospect of female football players but, as with the sensationalist comments about the Los Angeles league, this example was typical of the column in which it appeared. The *Detroit Free Press*, as part of their coverage of the Bombers

[200] 'All American 1943', *Evening Independent* (Massillon, OH), 1 December 1943, 10; 'Sports', *Evening Independent* (Massillon, OH), 1 December 1944, 14.
[201] Milkman, 'Gender at Work' 470.

and Rockets game, included a cartoon of a female football player leaving men in her wake. While the artist depicted the woman beating the men, they also reassured the predominantly male sports page readers that she remained attractive by drawing her with a tiny waist, prominent bust, and curly hair with only a hint of her helmet showing. The caption began with the phrase 'news of a further invasion of the realm of masculine sports by women comes from Gladstone, Mich.'.[202] This invasion metaphor, which persisted in reports of women's football games from the late nineteenth century, suggests that women playing football are like enemy soldiers. While in the nineteenth century the use of the term invasion was as a connection to the memory of the Civil War, its use in 1941 made associations to World War II. The journalist implies that women were encroaching onto a territory where they were not welcome. The column appeared to be an opinion piece similar in style to the Cohn article that referred to the Los Angeles players as 'molls'. This comment was the only one that demonstrated concern about women playing football and thus was a minority view.

Reports about these leagues reveal that most newspapers that reported on them praised these young women, demonstrating that these events were mostly welcome to journalists. The level of concern that the press articulated about these leagues decreased as the years progressed, and this lack of alarm reflects broader discourses about women's roles and the growth of women's sport. While some reports provide evidence that the press treated the women as novelties, especially in the articles about the 1897 league in San Francisco, this was not the overriding narrative. Newspaper reports of the 1941 league in Chicago, with their lack of concern about the matches and positive photographs, starkly contrast the representation of the players in San

[202] Dale Stafford, 'To Whom It May Concern', *Detroit Free Press*, 17 June 1941, 13.

Francisco. While the media initially treated female football players as novelties, there was a shift towards seriousness as the years progressed.

Exploitation and Novelty: The Demise of the Leagues

The leagues' short lifespans suggest that the entrepreneurs' belief that there would be a lasting interest in watching women's football was incorrect. Oriard explains that 'inferior marketing and financial backing' was in part to blame, but 'cultural resistance was also likely crucial'.[203] However, contemporary reports indicate that other issues also contributed to the end of these leagues. While few newspapers viewed the players as novelties, spectators may have done so, although educators' concern about organisers exploiting the young women, and a lack of player interest, are also evident in articles. Organisers' poor marketing could have been the issue in San Francisco, where small advertisements and lack of widespread newspaper coverage are apparent. For example, the announcement on 22 December 1897 occupied only 14 of a possible 225 lines on the page and was only one column wide on an eight-column sheet.[204] The 24 December edition replicated the size, although the advertisement was at the bottom of column seven on an eight-column page.[205] Both pages include several larger advertisements, suggesting that the league probably had a limited marketing budget and could not afford anything more prominent.

Wider public indifference is evident in the leagues in San Francisco, Toledo, and Chicago, and contributed to their demise. For example, an advertisement for the second game in San Francisco revealed a reduced ticket cost with '[p]opular prices, 25c and 50c' reduced from 50c and 75c for the first match.[206] These price changes

[203] Oriard, *King Football*, 358.
[204] 'Ladies Football Game', *San Francisco Call*, 22 December 1897, 7.
[205] Ibid.
[206] 'Velodrome', *San Francisco Call*, 2 January 1898, 27.

indicate that there had not been the appetite for the game that organisers anticipated. Newspapers did not mention future games for the league, suggesting that these events had been a test to see whether spectators supported such activity. Brian Bunk finds it similarly challenging to establish a definitive reason for the failure of an 1893 women's soccer league in San Francisco. He states that economic reasons in the United States, as well as people turning up purely for the novelty, could be to blame, issues that could have similarly impacted this football league.[207] A lack of public interest was apparent in Chicago from the beginning. The organisers' decision to include the matches as part of bigger events suggests that they were concerned there may not be widespread interest in the league. The lack of information about the games in Chicago also indicates limited newspaper interest in the league's activities.

Reports from the second season in Toledo differ to the first, and reveal a decline in press and spectator interest in the league, in addition to the protests previously explored. For example, an article on 27 October 1934 mentioned that the teams would play their matches on Birmingham field. The report referred to the game as the players' 'initial performance', reducing the match to entertainment rather than genuine sporting endeavour.[208] The article was very brief, suggesting reduced editorial, and presumably reader, interest in the league. Similarly, a final three-sentence report in the *Toledo Blade* on 29 October starkly contrasted with the detailed articles of the previous year and merely stated that the East Side team defeated the West 12-0.[209] The *New York*

[207] Bunk, 'Colleen Brawns and Bonnie Lasses', n.p.
[208] 'Girls' Gridiron Teams to Play Here Sunday', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 27 October 1934, 12.
[209] 'East Girls Winners', *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), 29 October 1934, 18.

Herald Tribune declared that attendance had waned at games and the novelty had worn off.[210]

Newspaper reports hint at a lack of player interest in the San Francisco and Los Angeles leagues as a possible reason for their decline. The *San Francisco Call* reporter stated that following the first game 'some of the players have been let out and in their places are girls who will not shrink from slight punishment'.[211] Whether the organisers fired the players or the women decided to walk away is unclear, but this did not bode well for the development of a league. Organisers were obviously having problems retaining players who were willing to participate and play to the standard the promoters wanted or needed. Reports from Los Angeles hinted at some structural changes to the teams that also indicate possible recruitment issues. For example, on 15 December 1939, the *Los Angeles Times* mentioned coach Lee Dempsey of the Hollywood Stars and players Shirley Payne and Andy Fay.[212] However, earlier reports listed Dempsey as the Marshall & Clampett Amazons' coach. Similarly, descriptions of the Marshall & Clampett versus Chet Relph game from October 1939 listed Payne as a Marshall & Clampett player and Fay on the Chet Relph team.[213] However, in this later report, they appear to be on the same side. It is possible that the two teams merged because of the promoters' difficulty in finding enough players willing to play. Some reports suggest that Dempsey attempted to increase the football league's activities in the mid-1940s. For example, in October 1943, Halley Harding, in the *Los Angeles Tribune*, noted that Dempsey had contacted him regarding women playing football. Harding stated that Dempsey had two teams in the previous year, 'the Los Angeles All-

[210] Owen, 'Sports Among Women', 25.
[211] 'Rugby Football at the Velodrome, *San Francisco Call*, 1 January 1898, 8.
[212] 'Girl Gridders Use Pro Rules', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1939, 15.
[213] 'De Soto Girls' Eleven Wins', 10.

Stars and the Hollywood All-Stars'.[214] This further change in team names suggests additional structural alterations to the league. The article was a drive to increase player numbers as it ended with the statement, '[i]f enough girls profess interest in the project, Kenny Washington will be drafted to coach the team.'[215] The involvement of Washington, 'one of UCLA's all-time gridiron stars' and a College All-Stars player in 1940, suggests that the organisers were taking the league seriously, or that they needed a well-known player to increase support.[216] Despite this comment, there is little evidence about what happened. Certainly, the proposal for an eight-team league that organisers hoped for appears to have never come to fruition. This lack of expansion is also true for the Chicago league where there is little evidence of teams in the other cities that entrepreneurs planned. It appears that a lack of interest by players, as well as by the paying public, could have led to these leagues' demises.

Cultural resistance, as in Toledo, was evident in one article about the Chicago league. The *Hartford Courant* stated that 'Illinois has put its foot down on girls [sic] football but the fair sex still is active as seconds and managers in boxing, as headliners in wrestling, and in softball, tennis, golf and many other sports.'[217] The brevity of this six-line article means it is difficult to isolate reasons for the concern over women's football, or who had raised these issues. That this journalist considered women's participation in other physical sports acceptable suggests that football was of particular concern. The sport's continued links with masculinity may have been the cause of this reaction since the highly physical sport of wrestling was acceptable.

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[214] Halley Harding, 'So What?', *Los Angeles Tribune*, 11 October 1943, 8.
[215] Ibid.
[216] David K. Wiggins, 'Kenny Washington, Woody Strode, and the Reintegration of the National Football League', in *Replays, Rivalries, and Rumbles: The Most Iconic Moments in American Sports*, ed. Steven Gietschier (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 69.
[217] 'Girls', *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT), 6 November 1941, 18.

While cultural resistance played a role in the demise of these leagues, it appears that other issues also contributed. A lack of continued interest by spectators was evident in both San Francisco and Toledo despite the entrepreneurs' hopes for additional matches. In Chicago, organisers' concern over the league's viability is apparent in the inclusion of games as part of other events. A lack of player interest is evident in the leagues in San Francisco and Los Angeles, with players leaving the San Francisco teams and the restructuring of sides in Los Angeles. Plans for the Chicago league to expand to other cities appear to have failed, and a lack of players could have also been to blame. Despite these entrepreneurs' ambition, there seems to have been a lack of interest in professional women's football.

Conclusion

These leagues were highly entrepreneurial, and the events in San Francisco echoed a broader interest in the professionalisation of female athletes in the late nineteenth century. As Park states, women in the late nineteenth century competed for prizes in swimming, rowing, cycling, and pedestrianism.[218] Future academic work can now add football to this list of sports. Similarly, some commodification of women's team sports coincided with the leagues in the 1930s and 1940s. Fidler notes that

> The administration of the Amateur Softball Association and the National Softball Association did not adhere to the prevailing educational philosophy for the conduct of women's sport. They promoted their organisations by encouraging intercity, regional, and national championships for public display. They allowed admission charges, utilization of male managers, and encouraged publicity highlighting individual accomplishments.[219]

[218] Park, 'Contesting the Norm', 730-749.
[219] Fidler, *The Origins and History*, 24.

The softball leagues that emerged in the 1930s demonstrate that these football examples were not isolated professional sports opportunities for women, although, it was not until 1943 that the AAGPBL developed as a replacement for male baseball during the war. The media accepted women playing baseball as they deemed the players to be 'patriotic pinch-hitters'.[220] The football leagues in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago have similarities to those in softball. Women competed on the gridiron under the guidance of male managers and coaches, in front of large, paying crowds, and newspaper reports primarily focused on players' skills. Yet, these leagues contravened broader pedagogical attitudes. For example, in the 1930s, female physical educators, as part of the American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, accepted competition only 'if it was controlled and if participants focused on the fun of the game, not the score on the board'.[221] The response to a highly competitive interscholastic basketball competition for young women in Iowa demonstrated these issues when 'voluminous correspondence' raised concerns about the event.[222]

It is possible to reject Oriard's assertion that the media covered these games only on highly gendered sports pages 'where women most conspicuously represented sex and beauty'.[223] Editors placed most articles on sports pages alongside reports of men's activities, including football. Articles about all the leagues often mirrored those about male games, and newspapers frequently praised the women for their ability. Such responses contrasted with educators' beliefs about appropriate sport for young women. For example, educators in the 1890s required women's physical activities to have the

[220] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 45.
[221] Austin, *Democratic Sports*, 116, 119.
[222] Lucas, 'Courting Controversy', 285.
[223] Oriard, *King Football*, 360.

qualities of '[m]odesty, gentility, and grace'.[224] Similarly, in the 1930s 'the female's role [in football] was to admire male prowess and confirm its importance beyond the football field'.[225] Press coverage of other female athletes, such as Babe Didrikson, demonstrated Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects by mentioning her athletic feats but also the 'cooking prize or sewing prize' she had won when she was younger.[226] However, similar comments did not appear extensively in reports of these football leagues. Conversely, accompanying photographs provide evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence by contrasting athletic pictures of the women with ones that emphasised their attractiveness.

The fact that entrepreneurs believed they could make money from promoting female football teams suggests that they thought attitudes towards women playing football would be positive. The opinions of the organisations that protested the Toledo league represented the broader pedagogical concerns about women's sport discussed in Chapter 3. None of the articles about these leagues mentioned medical concerns about these women playing football. While newspapers clearly emphasised the participants' sporting background and suitability for playing football, they did not articulate any alarm from the medical community.

Taken alongside playing for fun, against and alongside male players, and in educational establishments, these professional leagues were another way in which women played football between 1890 and 1960, and the most formal and competitive version of the sport analysed thus far. However, the fact that only four leagues existed, and only in California and the Midwest, demonstrates that these were minority events.

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[224] Andrea Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press), 193.
[225] Oriard, *King Football*, 351.
[226] Austin, *Democratic Sports*, 112.

These leagues exhibited characteristics that contradicted broader social norms about the type of competition suitable for women. Yet, despite some of these women contravening social and pedagogical attitudes, the media's response was mostly positive. As the 1940s continued, opportunities for women to play competitive contact football declined. The post-World War II years saw a return to playing for fun, and not commercial reasons, as part of changing social conditions for women.

Chapter 5: Fun and Philanthropy in the 1940s and 50s

'Shades of a Rummage Sale -- It's Women's Football Game' declared a 1943 headline in the *Coe College Cosmos*. The article's author asked readers to imagine a women's football team and suggested that players would ask questions such as '[d]o you think the coach will mind if I show up with my hair in curlers?'[1] Similarly, humourist Frank Sullivan's 1949 *New York Times* article proposed setting up a football league 'from teams of women shoppers from the big league department stores of New York, Chicago and other large cities'. Sullivan added that the women could play in the 'Bargain Bowl on New Year's Day'.[2] The *Oakland Tribune* likewise joked that football would help train female students 'for future careers storming the bargain counters'.[3] The similarities between these satirical pieces from the 1940s and the 1905 cartoon (Figure 1.1), which compared women waiting for the beginning of the sales to football players, suggests that even in the 1940s newspaper editors still considered these comparisons amusing. In the mid- to late 1940s and the 1950s, female players used this novelty factor to help raise money for good causes.

Women's participation in football in the post-World War II years was similar to how it had been in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a couple of ways. Firstly, in both periods they primarily played for fun; secondly, female football players conformed to the era's expectations of appropriate behaviour. Whereas in the games evaluated in Chapter 1 women played football for their own enjoyment, in the 1940s and 1950s women took part primarily to amuse others rather than themselves. These games were, as in the early years, also modified versions of football that removed

[1] 'Shades of a Rummage Sale – It's Women's Football Game', *Coe College Cosmos* (Cedar Rapids, IA), 13 October 1943, 4.
[2] Frank Sullivan, 'And to All A Good Fight: Shoppers, Brave and Cowardly Storm the Christmas Barricades', *New York Times*, 11 December 1949, M11.
[3] 'Co-Ed Football', *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, CA), 15 November 1948, 36.

much of the sport's violence. Unlike in the 1890s and early 1900s, girls and women played these later games in public, partly because of the organisers' philanthropic aims. This return to playing modified football for amusement suggests that female football players lost the advances they had made since the 1890s.

The women's football matches for which there is evidence in post-World War II America resonated with wider discourses about female roles in these years. The charitable aims of many of their games during this period echoed the separate spheres philosophy that urged 'women into those public activities that seemed nurturant and feminine', including female involvement in activities aimed at social improvement.[4] The return to a domestic life for women was, according to Linda Eisenmann, because 'deep uncertainties raised by the Cold War prompted Americans to envisage home and family as a haven from a world at risk'.[5] These social conditions also affected female sporting opportunities, especially in schools and colleges where educators had a 'conservative, limited vision of the "right" sort of athletics', those with limited physical contact and competition.[6] Women's participation in sport also depended on what Mary Jo Festle refers to as the 'feminine bargain', where women who played competitive sport needed to emphasise their femininity to avoid unflattering stereotypes.[7] Women who played football in the years following World War II, and the newspapers that reported on their games, similarly needed to emphasise these characteristics.

Beginning with an analysis of society and sport for women in the mid- to late 1940s and the 1950s, the case studies of female football games in these years reveal how the

[4] Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 28.
[5] Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women*, 3, 14.
[6] Mary Jo Festle, *Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women's Sport* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 10.
[7] Festle, *Playing Nice*, 100.

players conformed to educators' and society's standards and norms. Analysis of the reports of these games makes it clear that the publication's readership influenced the way that writers covered these matches. The first focus is the sorority magazines and the favourable way that their magazines reported these events. The second theme is newspapers' contrasting responses. Many newspapers highlighted female players' attractiveness, included comments stereotyping the young women, and emphasised the novelty of women playing football. This type of coverage further demonstrates that female players lost some of the progress they had made since their initial participation in the late nineteenth century.

Separate Spheres: Women in Society and Sport in Post-World War II America

The 1940s and 1950s was a time of shifting gender dynamics which impacted how women played football. During World War II, women held various roles in industry, but employers and returning servicemen expected that female employment would be only temporary. Even during the war, employers permitted women to take on only tasks that they considered 'suitable' for them, with some workplaces labelling jobs as 'male' or 'female', demonstrating their concern about the appropriateness of some roles.[8] Women in the military were similarly restricted as the authorities did not permit servicewomen to lead men and, following the war, many were 'not eligible for military insurance or for GI benefits'.[9] In post-World War II America, there was an 'almost frenetic return to traditional gender roles', which restricted the jobs that women could do as they returned to the home.[10] Women's domestic roles constrained them to a

[8] Ruth Milkman, 'Gender at Work: The Sexual Division of Labor During World War II', in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 468.
[9] S.J. Kleinberg, *Women in the United States: 1830-1945* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), 227; Ruth Milkman, 'Gender at Work', 467.
[10] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate Is Not Equal in Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 188.

separate spheres philosophy that was similar to that seen in the late nineteenth century.

White, middle-class women's roles in the 1940s and 1950s were primarily domestic. In these years, women who had moved into the suburbs with their families joined community organisations such as Parent Teacher Associations and church groups, roles associated with ensuring a stable domestic life.[11] The young women on college campuses predominantly came from this same demographic despite the expanded reach of higher education in postwar America.[12] The return to traditional gender roles meant that some educationalists believed that female students should be schooled primarily for domesticity, returning to the skills necessary to run a home that were core components of girls' lessons in the late nineteenth century.[13] College leaders differed in their opinions about female education in these years, and starkly contrasting views from the presidents of two all-female establishments emphasised these disparities. W.K. Jordan, Radcliffe's president from 1943 until 1960, informed women who entered the college in the 1950s that 'their education would prepare them to be splendid wives and mothers, and their reward might be to marry Harvard men'. However, Harold Taylor, Sarah Lawrence's president, argued that women should ' "find their own fulfilment" without making their needs subservient to the "needs of men" '.[14] Women faced contrasting opinions over the kind of education they should receive and their future roles in society. This emphasis on domesticity took on explicitly political overtones in the 1950s as some critics made links between feminism and communism.

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[11] Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 247.
[12] Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women*, 7.
[13] Barbara Solomon Miller, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 187-9; John L. Rury, *Education and Women's Work: Female Schooling and the Division of Labor in Urban America, 1870-1930* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 14.
[14] Solomon Miller, *In the Company of Educated Women*, 193.

For example, Oliver C. Carmichael, the chancellor, and later president, of Vanderbilt University, 'asked American women to pursue a crusade against communism by educating their children about the superiority of American life'.[15] Women's roles required adherence to narrowly defined American values, and anything different could indicate communist leanings, a point made explicit when Columbia University professor John Hanna, in a House Un-American Activities Committee pamphlet, stated that '[t]he girls' schools and women's colleges contain some of the most loyal disciples of Russia'.[16]

As women retreated into domestic roles, fashion and movies emphasised the female form and feminine beauty. For example, Christian Dior's 1947 New Look style defined waists and breasts to highlight idealised female body shapes.[17] Similarly, movies, television, and magazines 'cast feminine virtue in terms of physical allure, featuring women with large bosoms, tiny waists, elaborate hairdos, and generous applications of makeup'.[18] In the 1950s, these same sources informed women that to get a man they needed to be sexy and attractive.[19] As fashion changed to the 'baby doll' look, movies reflected these fluctuations and no longer portrayed women as independent and assertive but as 'silly, fluffy characters played by Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds [or] … sexy but innocent', for example, Marilyn Monroe.[20] A clear female ideal was evident.

Women's return to a domestic role, the importance of family life and traditional femininity, and some authority figures' concern about feminism also affected female

[15] Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women*, 2.
[16] Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 44.
[17] Ibid., 243.
[18] Pamela Grundy, 'From Amazons to Glamazons: The Rise and Fall of North Carolina Women's Basketball, 1920-1960', *Journal of American History* 87, no. 1 (2000): 137-8.
[19] Elaine Tyler May, 'Pushing the Limits: 1940-1961', in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 507.
[20] Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 248.

participation in sport. Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford note that the appeal of sports to spectators rested not on the skills on display but 'on the degree to which athletic exploits represented broader social values'.[21] This attitude was certainly the case in the years following World War II, when 'many women adopted an apologetic stance about their athletic skill. Even as they competed to win, they made sure to display outward signs of femininity in dress and demeanor.'[22] The changing social milieu meant that, much like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, educators and authority figures restricted women's participation in sport, or emphasised their attractiveness when they did participate.

Women in the 1940s and 1950s faced conflicting information about the appropriateness of competitive sport. In the late 1940s, some female educators, who had promoted physical activity for women during the war, scaled back on 'non-essential extracurricular activities', restricting sporting opportunities.[23] The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) ended in 1954, and many women's basketball teams folded as 'a period of social realignment and conservative cultural retrenchment' affected these female teams.[24] Even though the Harrisburg Senators' general manager, Howard Gordon, signed Eleanor Engle to the team in 1952, George M. Troutman, the President of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, voided her contract with this minor league baseball team.[25] Troutman's statement made it clear that women were barred from playing in baseball's minor

[21] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 112.
[22] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 181.
[23] Jaime Schultz, *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women's Sport* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 84.
[24] Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*, 4; Marilyn Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse: The Exclusion of Women from Baseball* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 68.
[25] Cohen, *No Girls in the Clubhouse*, 71-2.

leagues. Although women began playing soccer in the elite single-sex colleges in the 1950s, most students only completed drills and rarely joined teams, as 'soccer was still considered too manly a sport for most girls'.[26] Educators, therefore, would also consider football, if not adapted, inappropriate for young women in these years, continuing their concerns analysed in Chapter 3 when physical education departments began to include modified football on college campuses.

The importance of female beauty in these years was also evident in sport. In the 1940s and 1950s, some authority figures opined that female athletes should appear attractive. Mary Jo Festle states that International Olympic Committee (IOC) member Avery Brundage considered female Soviet athletes unfeminine and suggested that 'their athleticism made them ugly'.[27] When media reports 'of unapologetically muscular Soviet female athletes inundated the United States, many decried the loss of femininity in sport and feared that male imposters had infiltrated women's events.'[28] Similarly, in 1960, the *New York Times Magazine* asked, 'Do Men Make Passes at Athletic Lasses?'[29] In posing this question, the author suggested that physical exertion might threaten women's heteronormativity and that female athletes were unattractive. Consequently, American women needed to avoid highly physical activities and conform to social expectations of idealised female beauty, including in modified football games. Some events' organisers made this a requirement of their female players. For example, the AAGPBL stipulated that women 'always appear[ed] in feminine attire', including wearing lipstick and keeping their hair long because the league did not permit 'boyish

[26] Elise Pettus, 'From the Suburbs to the Sports Arenas', in *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*, ed. Lissa Smith (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 247.
[27] Festle, *Playing Nice*, 88-9.
[28] Lindsay Parks Pieper, '"Wolves in Skirts?" Sex Testing in Cold War Women's Sport', in *Defending the American Way of Life: Sport, Culture, and the Cold War*, ed. Toby C. Rider and Kevin Witherspoon (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2018), 86, 91.
[29] William Furlong, 'Venus Wasn't A Shot-Putter', *New York Times*, 28 August 1960, SM14.

bobs'.[30] Similarly, Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball teams frequently mandated that women wore lipstick and banned them from wearing casual trousers.[31] The AAU's annual tournament also included an evening event where, with 'trumpets blaring and a spotlight following them, a select group of players would parade around the court in front of fans' from which organisers selected the 'Beauty Queen'.[32] The need for women to appear attractive would be especially pertinent in sports strongly associated with masculinity, or ones requiring high levels of strength.

The importance of female athletes appearing feminine meant that women's main football role in the 1950s was decorative, evidenced in the increasing prominence of female cheerleaders in these years. The position of cheerleader, or yell leader, was previously a male preserve that educators considered a leadership role.[33] However, by the 1950s, cheerleading was 'primarily a feminine experience', although some colleges resisted female cheerleaders, especially when male students returned from the war and wanted to continue in their previous roles.[34] Consequently, several institutions, including the University of Tennessee, banned women from this role.[35] Despite these exclusions, the feminine cheerleader quickly became a sex symbol in the post-war years, with the covers of magazines and adverts including their image with the 'perfect blends of sexual fantasy and girl-next-door wholesomeness'.[36] The female cheerleader

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[30] All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, 'Rules of Conduct', http://www.aagpbl.org/history/rules-of-conduct (accessed 29 January 2019).
[31] Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*, 114.
[32] Festle, *Playing Nice*, 49.
[33] Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, 'Commanding the Room in Short Skirts: Cheering as the Embodiment of Ideal Girlhood', *Gender and Society* 17, no. 1 (2003): 76; Jaime Schultz and Andrew Linden, 'From Ladies' Days to Women's Initiatives: American Pastimes and Distaff Consumption', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 1-2 (2014): 161.
[34] Mary Ellen Hanson, *Go! Fight! Win! Cheerleading in American Culture* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995), 24.
[35] Natalie Adams and Pamela Bettis, *Cheerleader: An American Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 29-30.
[36] Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 185.

contrasted with the masculine football player and 'enhanced the "manliness" of male athletic contests'.[37] This juxtaposition is similar to the role of society women who attended matches in the 1890s to 'render the brutal game more "civilised" ' than it appeared.[38] Consequently, when women played the sport, they had to demonstrate the kind of feminine attributes that spectators expected.

There were some encouraging signs for female sport in the mid- to late 1940s and the 1950s, although these were in the minority. Some physical educators 'hoped to create a post-war world that encouraged girls and women to step beyond gender constraints'.[39] For example, in 1941, female physical educators from Ohio State proposed the creation of a female National Collegiate Athletic Association and established a national golf tournament for women. While many educationalists at other colleges and the National Association of Directors of Physical Education criticised the golf competition, 38 women took part, representing 21 universities and colleges.[40] Critics were concerned about the presentation of medals and the use of a professional golfer as a referee.[41] As with the women's football league in Toledo, educators' concerns were not about the sport itself, but about its links to professionalism. Consequently, when women played football in these years, it needed to be free of any similar associations. In international sport, female participation in competitions such as the Olympics was increasing. At London in 1948, 390 women took part in 19 events; by 1964 this had risen to 678 female participants in 33 activities.[42] The American team

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[37] Benjamin Rader, *American Sports from the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 5th edn (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 231.
[38] Oriard, *King Football*, 176.
[39] Schultz, *Qualifying Times*, 84.
[40] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), 163-8.
[41] Ibid, 169.
[42] International Olympic Committee, 'Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement', https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Factsheets-Reference-Documents/Women-in-the-Olympic-Movement/Factsheet-Women-in-the-Olympic-

took 38 female athletes to London in 1948 and 81 to Tokyo in 1964. Helen Lenskyj notes that the IOC added volleyball and basketball for women to the Olympic programme in the 1960s and 1970s, 'two team sports previously viewed by the IOC as too masculine', but that they balanced this with the inclusion of 'the hyperfeminine, female-only events of rhythmic gymnastics and synchronised swimming'.[43] There were thus some increasing opportunities for sportswomen, but educators' and event organisers' emphasis was often on reducing competition and highlighting female beauty.

The primary way that women and girls played football in these years was in modified football matches, and the corresponding media coverage often emphasised the participants' attractiveness and female stereotypes. Women's return to traditional domestic roles and the importance of female beauty restricted their opportunities to play football to these fundraising events. Female football players lost much of the progress that they had made since 1890, the result of the gender conservatism in post-World War II America.

'Service to Our Communities': Sororities' Football Philanthropy

In the 1940s and 1950s, the primary motivation for women playing football was to raise money for charity, echoing middle- and upper-class women's social improvement activities. During the Cold War, American periodicals used examples of female participation in volunteering to emphasise the differences between Soviet and American women.[44] Charitable work was thus an important signifier of patriotism.

Movement.pdf#_ga=2.107849282.1182312969.1597924066-185962406.1597924066 (accessed: 20 August 2020).

[43] Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'The Olympic Industry and Women: An Alternative Perspective', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, ed. Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 432.

[44] Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women*, 15.

Educational establishments used football as a means of raising money for a diverse range of charities, although a frequent recipient of the funds was the college or school itself.[45] Most matches took place in schools and colleges, and it was sororities and other student groups that organised them rather than physical education departments. Membership of sororities involved, then as now, a range of social obligations, including 'parent weekends, date nights, bar crawls, intramural sports … pageants, carnivals, homecoming activities … runs and walks for various causes and house parties'.[46] Historically, these organisations were designed to support female students on campus and were concerned 'with intellectual performance and a sense of responsibility to "make good" as female collegians'.[47] While games like these took place across the country, sororities' philanthropic aims meant that they led the way in organising such events.

Sororities' publications and local and national newspapers reported on these matches, although their styles of coverage differed. Sororities' magazines responded positively and without an emphasis on the participants' appearances. This type of reporting, written by women about women and for women, contradicts Ted Kian's research on the impact of gender on articles about female tennis players. Kian found that 'female journalists largely reinforced hegemonic masculinity through the use of sexist and stereotypical descriptors that de-valued the athleticism and accomplishment of female

[45] 'All-Girl Football Game at Wortham Next Wednesday', *Mexia Daily News* (Mexia, TX), 21 November 1947, 6; 'Female Cubs, Pigtails Play Game Tonight', *Anniston Star* (Anniston, AL), 6 November 1951, 9; 'Girls Football Game Is Scheduled At Oxford High Tomorrow Afternoon', *Anniston Star* (Anniston, AL), 25 November 1952, 13; 'Allen and Anna Girls Football Teams to Play', *McKinney Daily Courier-Gazette* (McKinney, TX), 1 November 1956, 1; 'Columbia Girls to Stage Grid Battle Tonight', *Monroe News-Star* (Monroe, LA), 2 November 1956, 14; 'Girls Play Football', *Whitewright Sun* (Whitewright, TX), 4 October 1956, 6; 'School Girls Set to Play Football', *Waco-News Tribune* (Waco, TX), 12 December 1957, 14; 'Girls Football at Woodbury', *Nashville Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), 3 November 1959, 17.
[46] Lisbeth Berbary and Corey Johnson, 'The American Sorority Girl Recast: An Ethnographic Screenplay of Leisure in Context', *Leisure* 36, no. 3-4 (2012): 244.
[47] Diana B. Turk, *Bound By A Mighty Vow: Sisterhood and Women's Fraternities, 1870-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), n.p.

athletes'.[48] In these case studies, it was newspapers, not sorority magazines, that often emphasised players' appearances and heteronormativity, included stereotypes about female behaviour, and emphasised the novelty of female football matches. The less commercial nature of sorority publications compared to newspapers and their female audience were no doubt the cause of their different reporting styles.

College sororities were influential organisations in the culture of charitable football games in the post-World War II years, and their involvement echoed the philanthropic organisations that some women in society joined. In 1927, Pauline Hodgson, a physical educator at the University of Michigan, stated that sororities were a logical group for intramural athletic activities on campus because they 'have the strongest *group* spirit and the tradition and habit of doing things together', including charitable events.[49] Philanthropic work was a crucial component in the foundation of many sororities. For example, in 1893 Alpha Xi Delta's founders instilled their organisation with critical concepts of '[s]isterhood, leadership, knowledge and service to our communities', purposes that continued in the post-World War II years.[50] In the 1950s, the same sorority established their foundation with the aim 'of preparing strong, capable, intelligent women to lead Alpha Xi Delta and our world', including through philanthropic activities.[51] Similarly, Kappa Kappa Gamma's founders created their sorority to 'express their belief in a woman's potential to impact the world' and, in 1902, they

[48] Ted Kian, 'Examining the Impact of Journalists' Gender in Online and Newspaper Tennis Articles', *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal* 20, no. 2 (2011): 3.
[49] Pauline Hodgson, 'The Development of Intramural Athletics for College Women', *American Physical Education Review* 32, no. 7 (1927): 492. Emphasis in original.
[50] Alpha Xi Delta, 'Our Mission', https://www.alphaxidelta.org/our-mission (accessed 2 April 2019).
[51] Alpha Xi Delta, 'About the Foundation', https://www.alphaxidelta.org/about-the-foundation (accessed 18 October 2019).

started raising money to help women access higher education.[52] These charitable aims continued into the 1940s and 1950s when Kappa Kappa Gamma raised money for scholarships, international study, the Rose McGill fund for helping students in need of financial aid, and French relief efforts following World War II.[53] Some of these sororities did not formally select specific charities to support until several years after their formation. However, their founders established the organisations to improve society and help female students when there were fewer women on campus, aims that continued into the post-World War II years.

While occasional philanthropic events used other sports, the number of reports about charitable football games reveal that it was the primary game that sororities played to raise money. Occasionally, sororities used baseball games to make money. For instance, in 1950, the *Tampa Tribune* described a game played between Beta Sigma Phi and the Leesburg Elks Club.[54] Similarly, in 1954 the Tucson chapter of Gamma Phi Beta played a charitable softball game.[55] In 1951, the *Nashville Tennessean* reported on a charity high school sorority basketball tournament that raised $1,000 for a local orphanage.[56] However, these are rare examples in comparison to the high numbers of football games that sorority members played.

One of the ways that sororities raised money for charity was by taking part in so-called 'Powder Bowls' or 'powderpuff' games, the references to a beauty product emphasising

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[52] Kappa Kappa Gamma, 'About Us', https://www.kappakappagamma.org/Kappa/About_Us/In_the_Beginning/ (accessed 2 April 2019).
[53] Kappa Kappa Gamma, 'Philanthropies and Projects of Kappa Kappa Gamma 1948-1950', https://kappa.historyit.com/item-view.php?Philanthropies-and-Projects-of-Kappa-Kappa-Gamma-19481950&id=29550 (accessed 18 October 2019).
[54] 'Leesburg Elks, Sorority in Charity Game', *Tampa Tribune* (Tampa, FL), 30 June 1950, B1.
[55] 'Tucson', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, December 1954, 44.
[56] 'Deltas Capture Sorority Title', *Nashville Tennessean*, 17 March 1951, 11; 'Announcements', *Nashville Tennessean*, 13 March 1952, 14.

the social norms to which players needed to adhere. Michael Oriard defines such matches as 'a game of touch football [played] for fun or to raise money for a local charity'.[57] To emphasise their novelty, some of the organisers of these events made explicit links to the fact that they were mock versions of male matches. For example, Kappa Kappa Gamma's publication, *The Key*, described most of their events as 'Bowl Games'; these matches included the 'Bloomer Bowl' at Rollins College, the 'Mud Bowl' at Florida and Northwestern, and the 'Punch Bowl' at George Washington University.[58] References to the events as 'Bowl' games associated them with the prestigious collegiate matches such as the Rose Bowl, Orange Bowl, Sugar Bowl, and Cotton Bowl, although in a mocking tone. The Orange, Sugar, and Cotton Bowls began in the 1930s to compete with the older Rose Bowl as a means of attracting tourists and publicity for their local areas, as well as having charitable aims.[59] These references to these highly publicised male games heightened the difference between the male events and those that sororities played. The emphasis on a beauty product implied the inferiority of the female version of football, while also highlighting stereotypes about women's concern over their appearances.

The publications of Alpha Xi Delta, Gamma Phi Beta, and Kappa Kappa Gamma demonstrated that these organisations regularly used football for charitable reasons. For example, *The Alpha Xi Delta* mentioned games at Ohio University in 1949, 1950, and 1954, and reported on a game against Delta Gamma at Bowling Green State University in 1952.[60] *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta* has examples of matches from

[57] Oriard, *King Football*, 352.
[58] 'Chapter News', *The Key*, April 1947, 164; 'Chapter News', *The Key*, April 1950, 148; 'Chapter News', *The Key*, April 1950, 154.
[59] Michael Oriard, *Bowled Over: Big-Time College Football From the Sixties to the BCS Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 54.
[60] Bob Carboni, 'Maybe They Don't Look Like Athletes', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1949, 158; 'No title', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1950, no page number; Helen Clark, 'Pi Girls

as early as 1949 where members played at Michigan State.[61] The March 1951 issue of *The Crescent* mentioned events at Michigan State, North Dakota State, Wittenburg University, and Colorado College.[62] In March 1954, *The Crescent* referred to a game at Boston University that raised money for an unspecified charity.[63] A 1955 article reported on the 'Bromo Bowl' at North Dakota State where sorority pledges played the game in deep snow to raise money for the polio charity March of Dimes.[64] The Gamma Phi Beta women played other philanthropic touch football games, including at Oklahoma University in 1958 where the 'Glass Slipper Classic' raised money for an unnamed local charity.[65] In March 1959, *The Crescent* described games at the University of Iowa and Boston University.[66] Kappa Kappa Gamma's publication, *The Key*, included more games than Alpha Xi Delta's and Gamma Phi Beta's magazines combined; between April 1943 and April 1955 it mentioned twenty matches. Members played games as far west as the University of California, Los Angeles, through to George Washington University on the east coast, the University of Texas at Austin in the south, and the University of Wisconsin in the north. Despite the many games that *The Key*'s editors included, it is evident that chapters did not report all matches. For example, a comment in February 1949 about a game at the University of Texas at Austin stated it was the sixth annual match, yet it was only the second game at that institution that the magazine described.[67] This lack of reporting suggests that members did not always consider sorority women playing football games unusual enough to

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Observe Ohio U's 150th', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1954, 165-6; 'You Can Get Hurt Even If It's Fun', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, February 1952, 12.
[61] 'Just For The Fun Of It', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, February 1949, 25.
[62] 'On the Banks of the Red Cedar', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, March 1951, 3-4; 'On Campus with Our Chapters', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, March 1951, 44-56.
[63] Elaine Radway, 'On Campus with Our Chapters', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, March 1954, 35.
[64] 'No title', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, September 1955, inside front cover.
[65] Penny Nowery, 'The Crescent Goes Calling at Oklahoma University', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, December 1958, 3.
[66] 'On Campus with our Chapters', *The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta*, March 1959, 35-6.
[67] 'Campus Highlights', *The Key*, February 1949, 39.

communicate to other chapters; these events were an established part of sorority life which readers already knew were taking place across the country.

These reports were all positive and differed significantly to those in local and national newspapers, due, in part, to the different publications' readerships. The Gamma Phi Beta archives note that their magazine, *The Crescent*, 'has evolved over time, but has always been a key piece of communication for members everywhere'. Similarly, Kappa Kappa Gamma state that the mission of their publication, *The Key*, has always been to 'foster lifelong connectivity among members'.[68] The content of these publications with news about current members as well as large alumnae sections, including births, marriages, and deaths, demonstrates that their intended readership is predominantly sorority members. The positive reporting style contradicts research on this area where both Kian and John Vincent found that female journalists were just as likely to portray women in stereotypical ways.[69] Vincent states that this type of writing was because 'female journalists are socialized into covering sporting events using the dominant ideology so that they do not disqualify themselves from professional promotion and mobility'.[70] However, the young women who wrote for the sorority magazines were not professional journalists and were simply reporting on their chapter's activities. Consequently, the prevailing ideology is different from a male-dominated newspaper. Editors positioned these stories in sections of the organisations' magazines where different collegiate chapters submitted brief reports on their activities. There were often restrictions on the length of these submissions, which meant that chapters only

[68] Gamma Phi Beta Archives, 'Home', http://www.gpbarchives.org/ (accessed 16 November 2020); Kappa Kappa Gamma, 'About *The Key* Magazine', https://www.kappakappagamma.org/Kappa/thekey/ (accessed 16 November 2020).
[69] Kian, 'Examining the Impact of Journalists' Gender', 3; John Vincent, 'Game, Sex, and Match: The Construction of Gender in British Newspaper Coverage of the 2000 Wimbledon Championships', *Sociology of Sport Journal* 21, no. 4 (2004): 452.
[70] Vincent, 'Game, Sex, and Match', 452.

emphasised particularly noteworthy stories. Of the 35 articles from Alpha Xi Delta, Gamma Phi Beta, and Kappa Kappa Gamma between 1943 and 1959, only seven were anything other than a brief mention in a report of the chapters' activities. Reports did not sensationalise these games; they were regular occurrences that warranted little attention.

When sorority magazines included longer articles, the reporting was positive and lacked the emphasis on players' appearances and female stereotypes that newspapers included. For example, *The Alpha Xi Delta* extensively covered the development of the sport at Ohio University and Syracuse University, including a picture on the front cover of Syracuse student Jean Schier throwing a ball (Figure 5.1).[71] The photograph reveals no evidence of the male gaze as it did not sexualise Schier in any way; it merely portrayed her as a physical and competent football player. The photographer pictured Schier in an athletic pose dressed in long trousers and a sweatshirt that did not emphasise her figure or display bare skin beyond her face and forearms. Laura Mulvey 'argued that the controlling gaze … is always male', but these magazines, created for, and by, women, do not have any male influence.[72] Inside the front page, the anonymous author stated: 'Football is no longer just a man's game' and 'win or lose, Pi Chapter of Alpha Xi Delta at Ohio University is proud when checks from five to seven hundred dollars are sent to a worthy cause'.[73] William P. Torrey, the Chancellor of Syracuse University, claimed '[t]his is the true emancipation of women – I hope they don't get hurt'.[74] Torrey's comment simultaneously highlighted the positive step the players were taking, while articulating common concerns about women participating in

[71] 'No title', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1951, front page.
[72] Sohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silvermann, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (London: Routledge, 2006), 31.
[73] 'No title', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1951, inside front page.
[74] Ibid.

a sport associated with violence. The article also mentioned that experts still debated the sport's suitability for women, comments that echoed Torrey's concerns. However, the reporter also highlighted the benefits of increasing intra-sorority spirit as well as 'having some strenuous exercise and a lot of fun; gaining nationwide publicity favourable to the Fraternity system; and earning generous checks for worthy causes'.[75] The participants' emphasis was on fun and raising money for charity, two elements that made this event appropriate for women in the eyes of those in charge. Similarly, photographs of a 1952 game at Bowling Green State University were of the match itself with the participants dressed in tracksuit bottoms and sweaters. Likewise, pictures from a 1954 game at Ohio University simply showed players sat on the bench waiting to play and the game in progress.[76] All of the photographs showed women playing touch football wearing appropriate sporting attire. The publications did not want, or need, to highlight the players' looks because of the periodicals' predominantly female readership.

[75] 'Sports for Charity: Touch Football Earns Gifts for Cancer Fund', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1951, 133.
[76] 'You Can Get Hurt', 31; 'The Powder Bowl Game', *The Alpha Xi Delta*, November 1954, 166.

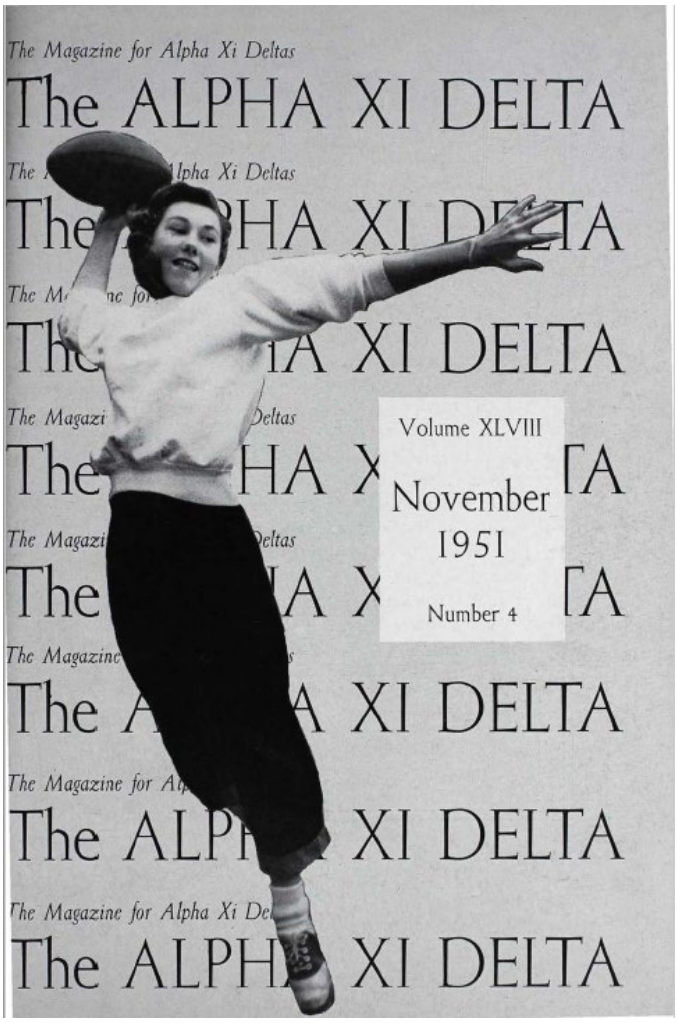

Figure 5.1: The Alpha Xi Delta front page, November 1951.

Sororities played some games against fraternities, but additional interventions increased the humour of these events. Male fraternity players sometimes faced restrictions on their play compared to the female players, although it is not clear who instigated such rules. For example, as early as 1939, the women from Kappa Alpha Theta beat Delta Tau Delta fraternity at New York University. Modified rules for the male players required them to 'pass and kick left handed and left footed and skip instead of run'.[77] Similarly, in 1953 Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority lost 6-0 to Phi Delta Theta fraternity at the University of Kansas in a game where rules restricted the

[77] 'N.U. Girls and a Referee Beat Frat Eleven', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 November 1939, 20.

fraternity players to walking.[78] A 1954 match between Chi Omega sorority and Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity at the University of Oklahoma also required male participants to walk instead of run.[79] An accompanying photograph showed Bud Spivey attempting to tackle Virginia Robinson, with the caption, 'No Rule Against Holding'. This comment suggested that the game allowed male players to make physical contact with female students that might not have otherwise been possible, or acceptable. It is not possible to know if these restrictions were about a concern that the men had an unfair advantage over the women, if it was a safety issue, or designed to amuse the spectators.

Women playing football to raise money for charities met sororities' philanthropic aims but also echoed women's social roles as home and community builders at the time. The non-contact nature of many of these matches, coupled with the novelty of women playing football, made them an ideal vehicle for use in this way. Games were so common that some went unreported: they were accepted practice, and authority figures were mostly unconcerned about them. Reports did not emphasise the players' looks or include stereotypes, despite the prevailing social attitudes about the importance of women's femininity. However, the same was not true of newspaper reports.

'Pigskin Puntin' Pretties': Adhering to the Female Ideal

Newspaper articles about these powderpuff games were a stark contrast to sorority publications' positive reports, and they reflected the gender conservatism of the mid- to late 1940s and the 1950s. As in earlier decades, most newspaper publishers aimed most of their content at men, but the increasing size of women's pages was a means to increase advertising revenue from companies who wanted to target this

[78] 'University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas', *The Key*, April 1953, 160.
[79] 'Girl Football: Wow', *Southern Illinoisan* (Carbondale, IL), 3 December 1954, 10.

demographic.[80] Even these women's sections 'often reinforced traditional and homogenous standards of femininity'.[81] Reports of women's powderpuff games emphasised players' interest in dating men, stressed participants' physical attractiveness, and used stereotypical tropes about women to portray characteristics that conformed to what readers would have expected in these years. Oriard explains that occasionally newspaper headlines hinted that these games represented a social revolution, but the accompanying text countered this suggestion.[82] For example, a 1948 headline 'Bison City Girls Battle On Gridiron' suggested that the girls played a tough game. However, the accompanying article referred to a 'pair of touchdown jaunts' as well as a 'complete absence of passing'.[83] Similarly, the headline of a 1954 *Arizona Republic* article, 'Football Heroines', suggested that the journalist had a positive response to a female game at Glendale High School. This title was in stark contrast to the statement that '[u]sually when girls get in a huddle they don't discuss football', linking the young women to the stereotype of female gossips.[84]

This style of reporting is also evident in some photographs and is clear evidence of Toni Bruce's rule of ambivalence with a contrast between women's skills and an emphasis on their appearances. For example, a 1953 report of a game at McLean High School in Texas included a picture of the girls lined up to play with no emphasis on their looks, nor were they placed in any suggestive poses.[85] However, the caption 'Pigskin Beauties' emphasised how attractive they were. This representation echoes

[80] Julia A. Golia, 'Courting Women, Courting Advertisers: The Woman's Page and the Transformation of the American Newspaper, 1895-1935', *Journal of American History* 103, no. 3 (2016): 607.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Oriard, *King Football*, 352-4.
[83] 'Bison City Girls Battle On Gridiron', *Endicott Daily Bulletin* (Endicott, NY), 12 November 1948, n.p.
[84] 'Football Heroines', *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, AZ), 25 November 1954, 3.
[85] 'Girls Football Tilt at McLean', *Pampa Daily News* (Pampa, TX), 15 November 1953, 8.

Jan Wright and Gill Clarke's research that found similar examples in articles about women playing rugby. They state that while pictures showed the players 'grimacing with the intensity and exertion of the action', the accompanying text trivialised and ridiculed them.[86]

Most photographs in the local, national, and sporting media were free of any emphasis on the players' looks. Pictures were often similar to those that sorority magazines printed, as the players were active participants in the game and were pictured wearing long trousers and sweatshirts. The newspapers thus did not present the women as the 'passive object[s] of sexual desire' that Mulvey articulated were key characteristics of the male gaze.[87] Similarly, many images did not provide evidence of Bruce's rule of sexualisation as the photographers did not objectify the women because the players did not display bare skin, nor were they in suggestive poses. Examples of such photographs come from across the country including California, Ohio, Texas, and Massachusetts, and from both high school and collegiate games.[88] For example, a picture (Figure 5.2) accompanying the report of a high school game in North Hollywood simply showed the match in action with players dressed in long-sleeved sweaters and long trousers.[89] Newspapers published similar photographs of sorority games from Ohio University, the University of Maryland, and an unnamed educational

[86] Jan Wright and Gill Clarke, 'Sport, the Media and the Construction of Compulsory Heterosexuality: A Case Study of Women's Rugby Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 34, no. 3 (1999): 233.
[87] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 19.
[88] 'High School Girls Play Football Before 700 in North Hollywood', *Los Angeles Times*, 11 November 1946, A1; 'Co-Eds Play Football for Cancer Fund Benefit in Ohio', *Decatur Review* (Decatur, IL), 2 November 1949, 25; 'Powder Puff Game Tonight', *Valley Morning Star* (Harlingen, TX), 24 November 1953, 1; 'Women's World? No Doubt About It at Boston U.', *Boston Daily Globe*, 4 December 1954, 1; 'It's the Annual 'Powder Puff' Game Between Boston University Coeds', *Boston Daily Globe*, 9 November 1958, 78; Walter Haight, 'Football Terpettes Are Good Mudders', *Washington Post* (Washington DC), 13 January 1952, C2.
[89] 'High School Girls Play Football Before 700', A1.

establishment in Harlingen, Texas.[90] All three pictures were action shots of players, wearing long trousers and either sweatshirts or shirts, running with the ball while their opponents chased them. Photographs of matches at Boston University reveal women wearing full football attire, including helmets, pads, and trousers, although it is not clear whether the games were full contact. For example, the 1954 *Daily Boston Globe* picture shows one player holding the ball while she attempts to evade her chasing opponents.[91] Similarly, in 1958, the *Globe* included six photographs from the game between Phi Beta Phi and Sigma Kappa, four of which showed women in full football uniform playing the game. The other two shots were of one team in a meeting and a player having her cut lip tended to.[92] None of the pictures emphasised the young women's beauty or their figures; they were not in sexually suggestive poses, and the photographer simply depicted them playing a physical sport. However, the accompanying articles were often a stark contrast to this.

[90] 'Co-Eds Play Football for Cancer Fund Benefit in Ohio', 25; 'Powder Puff Game Tonight', 1; Haight, 'Football Terpettes Are Good Mudders', C2.
[91] 'Women's World?', 1.
[92] 'It's the Annual 'Powder Puff' Game', 78.

Figure 5.2: ‘Down But Not Out’.

In some cases, reports were similar to those of male matches, but the headlines reassured readers that this was a fun event and they should not take it too seriously. For example, a 1949 *Albuquerque Journal* article about a game at Ohio University between Alpha Xi Delta and Pi Beta Phi provided details about how the teams scored points and referred to the participants in a similar way to reports of male players. The article provided each player’s name, weight, and position: ‘Joan Herbert, 124-pound back’ and ‘Ann Hammerle, 115-pound right halfback’. In contrast, the headline, the alliterative masterpiece ‘Pigskin Puntin’ Pretties Play Powder Bowl Tie’, emphasised the players’ appearances, as did the observation that ‘[t]he girls wore blue jeans and sweatshirts–and, of course, football helmets. Very attract–er, professional, they looked,

too.'[93] These comments provided a direct contrast between feminine stereotypes and the conventions of the male game, where attractiveness was never an explicit part of the conversation. Responses like these were common to non-university newspaper reports about these games, and stand as excellent examples of what Dunja Antunovic describes as the 'masculinist values [that] drive coverage that emphasizes sexual difference, constraining women to aesthetic sports and representations that accentuate the heterosexy ideal'.[94] In contrast to reports of male games, this account emphasised the players' sexual appeal despite the outward appearance of conforming to reporting norms. The journalist increased the article's mocking tone by juxtaposing praise with comments about the players' beauty.

Central to many reports was an emphasis on the players' heterosexuality, with some emphasising participants' availability for dates. This coverage provides evidence of Bruce's rule of compulsory heterosexuality that she states 'is evident in a media preference for, and highlighting of, sportswomen with sexual or emotional relationships with men'.[95] Susan Cahn notes that in the post-World War II era, journalists 'continued to attack the mannish athlete as ugly and sexually unappealing, implying that this image could only be altered through proof of heterosexual "success" '.[96] As a result, newspaper reports of these charitable games needed to ensure that readers did not question the players' heterosexuality. For example, in 1940, Pi Beta Phi and Delta Delta Delta played a game at the University of South Carolina for the Bundles for Britain charity. Reporters covering these matches stated that the game was going to be

[93] 'Pigskin Puntin' Pretties Play Powder Bowl Tie', *Albuquerque Journal* (Albuquerque, NM), 31 October 1949, 7.
[94] Dunja Antunovic, '"You Had to Cover Nadia Comaneci": "Points of Change" in Coverage of Women's Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 33, no. 13 (2016): 1552.
[95] Toni Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times: Sportswomen and Media Representation in the Third Wave', *Sex Roles* 74, no. 7-8 (2016): 366.
[96] Susan Cahn, 'From the "Muscle Moll" to the "Butch" Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women's Sport', *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 351.

'the first coed football match in the University's history' and that the programme would include each player's phone number.[97] Reports after the game mentioned a 'petite blonde halfback' and 'pretty Doris Nash', who played safety.[98] These comments suggest that organisers viewed the event as an opportunity for spectators to meet potential dates in addition to its charitable aims. In a report of a game played between Pi Beta Phi and Theta Phi Alpha at Boston University in 1952, it was not the players' names and phone numbers that organisers included in the programme but the colour of their hair and eyes.[99] This twist on the convention of reporting the height and weight of male players instead emphasised the players' looks: they were an object for the male gaze, and their appearances were the crucial factor. While it was the event's organisers who included this information in programmes, the fact that newspapers reported these details established a heteronormative narrative. Further evidence of the importance of these games as a source of romance is apparent in a 1954 report of a match between Pi Beta Phi and Kappa Kappa Gamma. The *Daily Boston Globe* article stated, '[t]he gals took so long between plays that the frost-bitten spectators assumed the girls talked over their week-end dates', assuming their heteronormativity as well as the stereotype of women gossiping.[100]

Newspapers' emphasis on players' physical attractiveness further demonstrates the importance of women conforming to the kind of orthodox femininity that readers in the post-World War II years expected. For example, a 1945 *Salt Lake Tribune* article referred to the Delta Delta Delta players at the University of South Carolina as

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[97] 'Carolina Coeds Play Football For Aid To British Cause', *Index-Journal* (Greenwood, SC), 5 November 1940, 3.
[98] 'Girls Play Football – 50-Yard Punt Return Wins', *San Antonio Light* (San Antonio, TX), 9 November 1940, 7.
[99] 'Diane Powder Bowl Star', *New York Times*, 7 December 1952, S7.
[100] Gene Mack, 'Coeds Battle to Scoreless Grid Tie on Frozen Field in B.U. Powder Bowl', *Boston Daily Globe*, 11 December 1955, C50.

'devastating dames' and the Pi Beta Phi players as 'luscious lassies' in a report of their game.[101] The *Burlington Daily Times-News* referred to the event as the 'Clash of the Cuties' and the *New York Times* reported that 'there was no … damage that couldn't be repaired by a comb, lipstick, powder and rouge'.[102] Journalists were swift to reassure readers about the players' appropriate behaviour with the comment that they were '[p]erfect ladies'. The sororities repeated the game in 1946 when reporters wrote that the players 'wiggled delightfully for 40 minutes' and male 'powder girls', dressed in tight sweaters and shorts, came on to the field during timeouts 'with dozens of hand mirrors, compacts, make-up kits, bobby pins and the like'.[103] The *Lead Daily Call*'s subheading reported that the 'Girls Frolic in Powder Bowl to Lusty Wolf Calls'.[104] These comments suggest that the spectators attended for amusement, even titillation, rather than to view a genuine sporting contest. This headline is clear evidence of Bruce's rule of sexualisation and the representation of women 'through patriarchal discourses of idealized sexual attractiveness'.[105] The use of the word 'lusty' emphasises the sexual element of the presumably male spectators' reaction to the game. These men clearly articulated their belief that the women were attractive through whistling, and while the article simply reported the spectators' responses, the journalist's decision to make it the subheading's emphasis accentuated this element of the event.

Although less common, occasionally some journalists included an explicit attempt to sexualise players in their reports. For example, Walter Haight's article about a 1952 University of Maryland powderpuff game, played in front of 500 spectators to raise

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[101] 'Coeds Arrange Football Tilt', *Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, UT), 14 March 1945, 14.
[102] 'Co-Ed Elevens To Clash', *Burlington Daily Times-News* (Burlington, NC), 14 March 1945, 6; 'University of South Carolina Girls Engage in Rough Powder Bowl Contest', *New York Times*, 25 March 1945, S1.
[103] 'Notre Dame Delta Dames Lose, 20-0, in Rugged Powder Bowl Contest', *Boston Daily Globe*, 24 October 1946, 16.
[104] 'Girls Football Finds Favor with Fans', *Lead Daily Call* (Lead, SD), 25 October 1946, 2.
[105] Bruce, 'New Rules for New Times', 366.

money for the Damon Runyan Cancer Fund, suggested that he was interested in seeing the players undressed.[106] Haight ended his report with a direct comment to his editor: 'Note to boss – Unable to get dressing room interviews.'[107] Locker room interviews in sport were only just beginning to appear in newspapers with Dick Young, a journalist for New York's *Daily News*, becoming one of the first journalists to get access to these venues in the mid-twentieth century.[108] Haight's comment suggests that both he, and the readers, longed to see the players undressed. It is the kind of statement that could be accompanied with a knowing nudge and wink. This comment is the perfect example of how it is possible to analyse the language of articles using Mulvey's male gaze theory. The gaze here is obviously a heterosexual male one, not only with the reporter but also with the predominant readers of the sports page. While Haight was not able to gain access to the dressing room, the women still represent the 'looked-at-ness' that Mulvey stated was part of the male gaze.[109] Haight's inclusion of this statement would probably make readers think of the players in a state of undress. The comment also implies that he had tried to gain access to the dressing room, sexualising the women as the subject of male desire.

In addition to making overt references to participants' attractiveness, newspapers also alluded to makeup and beauty products to emphasise to readers that players conformed to the behaviour expected of them in these years. For example, in November 1941, Kappa Kappa Gamma played Kappa Alpha Theta at Indiana University. An Associated Press (AP) report that the *Kingsport Times*, *East Liverpool Review*, and *Corsicana Daily Sun* used as the basis for their articles suggests there

[106] Haight, 'Football Terpettes Are Good Mudders', C2.
[107] Ibid.
[108] John Bloom, *There You Have It: The Life, Legacy, and Legend of Howard Cosell (*Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 76.
[109] Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.

was some journalistic concern at the 'outlandish football phenomenon'.[110] The *Kingsport Times* article stated that the game had the reasonable rule that 'no player may go into action before she has cut or taped her fingernails' but followed it with 'manicure and polish notwithstanding'.[111] Additional comments in the same article included that 'hair pulling will be penalized, primping will be allowed only between plays, and the referee will carry only a mirror'. The *East Liverpool Review*'s headline, 'Girly Girly Show', sexualised the players by comparing them to burlesque dancers.[112] A *Courier-Journal* report following the game continued the stereotypes: it claimed that the two sororities utilised the 'pat, primp, prayer system' to play the 'mud-pack' tie that the article referred to as 'the first annual "cosmetic clash" '.[113] Similarly, the *Record-Argus* reported on a 1949 game that young women from Sharon and Greenville in Pennsylvania played thus: 'The Sharon and Greenville feminine gridders, sans lipstick, "up-sweeps", finger-length eyelashes, "pancake" and what have you will "make-up" in far different attire.'[114] Likewise, in 1950, the *Washington Post*'s Morris Siegel reported on the 'merry maids of mascara' who played in the University of Maryland's annual Powder Bowl game between Kappa Kappa Gamma and Kappa Delta. The report described Mary Ylvisaker as 'playing despite a fractured cuticle' while Betty Baldwin was 'nursing a broken date' but scored on 'her favorite play, the old Chanel No. 5'.[115] Similar references were also evident in captions to photographs. For example, the *Washington Post*'s picture of a powderpuff game at the University of Maryland showed

[110] 'Hair Pulling Barred in Football Game for Indiana Coed Gridders', *Kingsport Times* (Kingsport, TN), 5 November 1941, 13; 'Girly Girly Show!', *East Liverpool Review* (East Liverpool, OH), 5 November 1941, 10; 'Greek vs. Greek in Girl Football On Indiana Campus', *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), 5 November 1941, 8.
[111] 'Hair Pulling Barred', 13.
[112] 'Girly Girly Show!', 10.
[113] 'To What Hath Football Come', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 7 November 1941, 5.
[114] 'Queen Football to Reign Nov. 13', *The Record-Argus* (Greenville, PA), 7 November 1949, 10.
[115] Morris Siegel, 'Kappa Deltas Dust Kappa Kappa Gammas in Terps' Mud-Packed Powder Puff Bowl', *Washington Post* (Washington DC), 17 December 1950, C1.

girls struggling with the muddy conditions and included the caption ‘More Mud Pack than Powder Puff’.[116] The article not only made allusions to the use of mud as a beauty treatment but also the voyeurism associated with female mud wrestling. Comments such as these reminded readers that the players, despite the masculine sport they were playing, still behaved appropriately.

The hair pulling trope, which journalists had been using about women playing football since the 1890s, was also prevalent in the 1940s and 1950s. The title of a report about the fifth all-girls game at O’Keefe High School in Atlanta referred to this stereotype directly: ‘Hairpulling Tactics Liven Annual Football Fracas’.[117] The article also mentioned that ‘incidentally there were more brunettes than blondes’. According to Geoffrey Jones, in postwar America the ideal female was blonde-haired and blue-eyed as seen in Barbie dolls and Hollywood movies including *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.[118] Therefore, the comment was emphasising how the participants conformed to the idealised beauty that fashion, films, and magazines espoused. Joe Creason mentioned hair pulling in his *Courier-Journal* article about a match at Owensboro High School in Kentucky. Creason wrote that ‘the opposing teams were manned (or womaned) by the longhair type of players—pony tails, pin curls, page-boy bobs and all such’.[119] While today an emphasis on reducing gendered language is widespread, Creason’s use of the term ‘womaned’ diminished the players’ efforts and was a sarcastic nod to their attempts to encroach on an assumed male domain. The emphasis on hair pulling here, as with the players in the San Francisco league in 1897, reduced women to

[116] ‘Maryland Co-Eds Tie in Muddy Grid Battle in Powder Puff Bowl’, *Sunday Star* (Washington DC), 7 December 1952, A3.
[117] Margaret McLemore, ‘Hairpulling Tactics Liven Annual Football Fracas’, *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 December 1957, 13.
[118] Geoffrey Jones, ‘Blonde and Blue-eyed? Globalizing Beauty, c.1945-c1980’, *Economic History Review* 61, no. 1 (2008): 132.
[119] Joe Creason, ‘Compact Football’, *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 4 December 1960, M7.

stereotypes and, as in Chapter 4, provides evidence for Jaime Schultz's comment that the female ponytail was a method of engendering normative femininity.[120]

Alongside hair pulling, the stereotype of women as gossips also pervaded coverage of charitable football games in the post-war period. For example, in 1956 the *Independent Journal* titled their report on a match between the junior and senior girls from East Denver High School as 'Girls Will Be Girls…Even In The Huddle'.[121] The article stated that 'girl's [sic] football may never make it. The reason: They can't stop talking in the huddles.'[122] The belief that women focused more on gossip than football tactics in huddles is common to several reports. For example, in 1955, an article about a powderpuff game at Southern Illinois University between Delta Sigma Epsilon and Pi Kappa Sigma mentioned that '[t]he huddles developed into a good old fashioned hen party'.[123] Similarly, in 1956 a *Long Beach Independent* article about a game between Delta Delta Delta and Alpha Phi at State College in Long Beach stated, '[y]ou give these gals a huddle and what do they do. They start yakking it up and first thing you know they get penalized for slowing up the game.'[124] Despite women playing a non-contact version of the sport, the historical association of football and masculinity, coupled with the return to traditional femininity and domestic roles for women, meant that reporters frequently reduced these young women to stereotypes.

Some reports did not focus on players' attractiveness or stereotypes but instead referred to role reversals to highlight the games' novelty and increase spectators' amusement at the unconventional role the women were assuming. For example, in

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[120] Schultz, *Qualifying Times*, 8.
[121] 'Girls Will Be Girls…Even In The Huddle', *Independent Journal* (San Rafael, CA), 9 October 1956, 11.
[122] Ibid.
[123] 'Delta Sigs Top Phi Kaps, 6-0', *Southern Illinoisan* (Carbondale, IL), 5 December 1955, 9.
[124] George Eres, 'Tri-Delts Win Women's Bowl Game', *Long Beach Independent* (Long Beach, CA), 7 December 1956, B1.

Brownwood, Texas, in 1952, the boys from May High School acted as the pep squad and put on a half time show.[125] Similarly, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that at Culver City High School in 1958, '[c]lad in short skirts, waving pompons and imitating the girls, men led the cheers'.[126] In 1960, Wellborn High in Alabama included a female football game as part of its TWIRP, The Woman Is Required to Pay, week, part of a celebration of reversed gender roles where 'topping it all' was the girls' football game with boys as cheerleaders.[127] Despite the relatively recent emergence of high numbers of female cheerleaders in the 1940s, women had established this role for long enough for these reversals to be amusing, and the cross-dressing no doubt helped. The position of cheerleader was not the only one that participants reversed. For example, in Kingsville, Texas, students named Danny Wright, the varsity team's quarterback, as the 1946 powderpuff game's 'sweetheart'.[128] Varsity team players acted as water boys in a 1947 match at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, that raised money 'to send relief packages to starving European nations'.[129] In 1953, boys supporting a Tri-Hi-Y (YMCA clubs for girls) match in Lumberton, North Carolina, dressed as girls for a mock beauty contest.[130] Journalists' inclusion of these role reversals in reports only further emphasised to readers these events' tongue-in-cheek nature.

Photographs of male players dressing for traditionally female roles further suggest that organisers' planned the events for spectators' amusement and not a genuine attempt by women to play the game. For example, the *Baltimore Sun* dedicated two pages to

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[125] 'Girls' Grid Game Is Slated at May High', *Brownwood Bulletin* (Brownwood, TX), 24 November 1952, 4.
[126] 'Notes On Our Cuffs', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 November 1958, WS1.
[127] Ronny Gibson, 'Wellborn Sets TWIRP Week', *Anniston Star* (Anniston, AL), 5 November 1960, 5.
[128] 'Whoops! Gals Play Football as Boys Dance', *Brownsville Herald* (Brownsville, TX), 26 November 1946, 9.
[129] 'Co-Eds to Battle In Powder Bowl at Rock Island', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 23 November 1947, 6.
[130] Elsie Prevatte, 'Time Out', *The Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC), 30 October 1953, 13.

photographs of a 1956 touch football game between some of the senior and junior females at Bladensburg High School in Maryland. The pictures on the first page were of the game, including an unnamed junior player running with the ball, the two teams on the line of scrimmage, and a player receiving treatment after an injury. The second page included two photographs from the game, a picture of seven female supporters dressed as powderpuffs, and one of six male cheerleaders dressed in skirts and wigs (Figure 5.3).[131] In Figure 5.3, the 'cheerleaders' were attempting to highlight that the role they were playing was traditionally feminine. They created fake busts, hitched their skirts up to reveal their legs, and wore headscarves to make them look like women, and presumably disguise their male haircuts. In dressing this way, the young men were not only emphasising women's appropriate role but also traditional notions of feminine beauty. This photograph further highlights the event's amusement factor and suggests that if a man acting as a cheerleader was ridiculous, so was the prospect of women playing football. Similarly, in 1957, the *Atlanta Constitution* printed side-by-side photographs of the O'Keefe High School game; one picture was of the players during the game while the other was of two males dressed as female majorettes, complete with skirts and feather-topped hats.[132] Photographs such as these emphasised the comedy value of these role reversals and would reassure readers that these games were purely for fun.

[131] 'Bladensburg's Girl Grid Teams', *Baltimore Sun*, 9 December 1956, MA16-17.
[132] 'Hairpulling Tactics Liven Annual Football Fracas', 13.

Figure 5.3: ‘Bladenburg’s Girl Grid Teams’.

At least one article provided some evidence of Bruce’s rule of infantilization, where journalists refer to women by their first name or as young ladies in an attempt to belittle their efforts. In 1940, the *Index-Journal* included a photograph of Sara Rushton getting tips from the varsity halfback Al Grygo.[133] The caption, ‘The Halfback and the Lady’, emphasised the difference between the two individuals and their appropriate roles. The journalist’s reference to Rushton as a lady, and not as a football player, is evidence of Bruce’s rule and reinforces assumed male superiority in football. The picture also provides evidence of Mulvey’s gaze theory, where spectators are ‘encouraged to identify with the look of the male hero and make the heroine a passive object of erotic

[133] ‘The Halfback and the Lady’, *Index-Journal* (Greenwood, SC), 5 November 1940, 5.

spectacle'.[134] While the photograph does not overtly sexualise Rushton, she is passive in comparison to the knowledgeable Grygo, her 'hero' in helping her understand the sport.

Some reports demonstrated Bruce's rule of ambivalence in the use of contrasting photographs. These images juxtaposed the players' athletic ability with references to their appearances and traditional female roles as a means to demonstrate the novelty of women playing football. For example, the report on the 1954 'Washbowl Classic' at Texas Tech included two contrasting photographs, one of four of the players in their formal dresses and another of the same four players clothed for football.[135] The pictures contrasted the players' off-pitch femininity with their on-pitch attire. The article otherwise explained when the teams intended to play, provided line-ups, and stated that the sides had been practising regularly: it was the pictures that emphasised the match's novelty. The *Pittsburgh Press* included two photographs of a 1960 game at the University of Pittsburgh. The first picture was of quarterback Connie Schussel making a pass over a defender who was attempting to tackle her, while the second showed seven kneeling female cheerleaders.[136] The editor's placement of the photographs side by side juxtaposed women's conventional roles in football with the unusual sight of a female quarterback. The clothing differences further emphasised the different positions with Schussel in a bulky, long-sleeved sweatshirt and long trousers, compared to the cheerleaders' tight tops and knee-length skirts. Placing these images next to each other not only juxtaposed the two roles but also asked readers to decide which was the appropriate female role.

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[134] Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists*, 31.
[135] 'Tech Coed Grid Teams Set for Washbowl Clash', *Lubbock Morning Avalanche* (Lubbock, TX), 5 November 1954, 1 of section 4.
[136] 'Girls Laced at Football', *Pittsburgh Press* (Pittsburgh, PA), 12 November 1960, 2.

A photograph accompanying one report went further than just emphasising the novelty of these games and sexualised the players. In 1940, the *Courier-Journal* reported on the University of South Carolina's powderpuff game that raised money for Bundles for Britain. The article included a large photograph of four players dressed in shorts, long-sleeved tops, and helmets.[137] The photographer took the picture from ground level, looking up at the young women, emphasising their bare legs and hinting at trying to look up their shorts. This photograph provides evidence of Mulvey's male gaze theory as the photograph draws the readers' gazes up their legs. The women have become the objects of sexual desire she described, and their appearance is clearly 'coded for strong visual and erotic impact'.[138] Similarly, Bruce's rule of sexualisation is apparent; the photographer's angle emphasises the women's legs to highlight the players' attractiveness but also hints at sexual availability as the picture draws the eyes towards their genital area.

The emphasis on participants' femininity was not just a media construction; players themselves highlighted these qualities, including the stereotype about women's concern over their appearances. For example, in 1947, the teams taking part in Indiana University's second Powder Bowl game took their team names, 'Chanel No. 11s' and the 'Revlon Roughnecks', from perfume and cosmetics brands.[139] In the article, it was only the reference to the team names and the comment that '[t]here were tears shed at the final gun' that emphasised anything stereotypically feminine. The rest of the report simply mentioned how the teams scored and highlighted Marcey Broyles for making two touchdowns. Similarly, the only reference to anything feminine in a game played at New Mexico Western College was the mention of the team names, the 'Perfumes' and

[137] 'Britain, Spectators Were Benefactors In Co-Ed Football', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 11 November 1940, 2.
[138] Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.
[139] 'Beaten in Powder Bowl, Roughnecks Shed Tears', *New York Times*, 7 December 1947, S3.

the ‘Colognes’. The *Deming Headlight* otherwise described the game as a ‘rough and tumble touch football classic’.[140] In these cases, the only references to feminine stereotypes came from the players themselves. Wright and Clarke noted a similar trend in female rugby players who take ‘on heterosexual markers of attraction’, including references to perfume.[141] These young women, like those of the 1890s, were aware of the social norms restricting their behaviour and named their teams accordingly. It is also possible that the women chose these names to increase interest in their event. Research on elite female athletes demonstrated that they believed ‘sex sells’ women’s sports, particularly for male audiences.[142] The women’s use of feminised team names resonates with this, suggesting that the players believed that they might attract more male spectators by emphasising their assumed use of beauty products.

Newspaper reports ensured that these young women, who were playing a sport still strongly associated with orthodox masculinity, conformed to social standards of appropriate behaviour and heteronormativity that were prevalent in the mid- to late 1940s and 1950s. Newspapers’ emphasis on players’ attractiveness, as well as reducing them to stereotypes, assured readers that these women conformed to American society’s gender conservatism in the middle of the twentieth century. While photographs were usually positive, direct contrasts with male players occasionally helped reassure readers that the women’s game was for fun, and was significantly different to men’s matches. Even when pictures were free of any sexualisation or stereotypes, associated captions sometimes emphasised the games’ novelty. These examples mirrored the prevailing social beliefs in these years about middle- and upper-

[140] ‘Deming Girl to Play Football’, *Deming Headlight* (Deming, NM), 26 October 1956, 1.
[141] Wright and Clarke, ‘Sport, the Media and the Construction’, 234.
[142] Mary Jo Kane, Nicole M. LaVoi, and Janet S. Fink, ‘Exploring Elite Female Athletes’ Interpretations of Sport Media Images: A Window Into the Construction of Social Identity and “Selling Sex” in Women’s Sports’, *Communication & Sport* 1, no. 3 (2013): 269.

class white women's appropriate role and the need for them to remain feminine, similar issues that women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries faced when playing football. There are similarities to the reports of the young women discussed in Chapter 1, but also significant differences. For example, in the late nineteenth century, the women themselves ensured that they maintained their propriety, and the media widely praised their sporting efforts. However, in the post-World War II years, it was primarily newspapers that highlighted participants' attractiveness.

Conclusion

In the 1940s and 1950s, the dominant version of football that women played was powderpuff games, held for the amusement of others and frequently as part of wider celebrations. Previous chapters contained other examples of female football players in the 1940s and 1950s, including a handful of young women who played on male football teams and those in college and high school physical education programmes whose teachers introduced them to touch football. However, the sheer number of powderpuff events, which extended across the country, reveals that they were the primary type of female football in these years. The prevailing post-war emphasis on idealised feminine beauty extended to sport, and the powderpuff games of the 1940s and 1950s exemplified this attitude. The women's desire to raise money for charity echoed their broader societal role of helping the community and supporting others. While these games were for amusement and to contrast the masculine sport, for some women, powderpuff matches may have been the only way that they could play football without contravening social norms. For example, Brock Thompson recalls his involvement in these events and how for the female players 'this was their only opportunity to play football in front of bleachers of roaring fans, without raising suspicious eyebrows'.[143] A

[143] Brock Thompson, *The Un-Natural State: Arkansas and the Queer South* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010), 17.

lack of players' voices in reports makes it difficult to evaluate whether this may have been the case.

There are more examples of Bruce's rules of media representation in the articles about these games than in other chapters within this thesis, a reflection of the gender conservatism in postwar America. For example, the reports that emphasised the players' appearances demonstrate her rule of non-sport-related aspects, and the focus on their relationships with men exhibit the compulsory heterosexuality principle. Ambivalence was particularly evident in photographs that juxtaposed women's skills with traditional roles. While sexualisation was not as prevalent in reports, it was apparent on some occasions. It is possible to apply Mulvey's male gaze theory to some of the photographs that recorded these matches, but this was not evident in many images. Powderpuff games also epitomised physical educators' opinion that '[t]he term *sportswoman* connoted a lady casually swinging a golf club or tennis racquet at the country club – a healthy, vibrant, graceful woman familiar with swimming and croquet.'[144] Young women playing football, unless modified and for fun and charitable purposes, would concern most female physical educators who believed that female sporting participation should be genteel.

This thesis has demonstrated that editors placed most reports of women's football games on sports pages, an indication that they considered the match a sporting event, not entertainment. Editors positioned 29 of the 55 newspaper articles used to inform this analysis of powderpuff games in sports sections and the others on news, youth pages, and in Sunday magazines. While such positioning may suggest that some editors considered these events to be sport, most of the sports pages that included

[144] Festle, *Playing Nice*, 12. Emphasis in original.

these reports were dedicated to minority activities, amusing stories, or were at the very end of the sports section amongst advertisements. For example, the *New York Times*' editor placed an article about a Pi Beta Phi victory in Ohio on a sports page that also included a story about a grandfather winning a national walking championship.[145] The locations of these articles suggest that editors believed the games were of little interest to readers of these pages. Therefore, while it may appear that some editors accepted these events as a genuine sporting event, they primarily used the reports to amuse readers. However, when the readership of a publication was predominantly female, such as with sorority magazines, articles had little emphasis on conventional femininity.

These examples of powderpuff games echo the conventional narrative of female sport in the mid- to late 1940s and the 1950s. Jean O'Reilly and Susan Cahn state that 'the popularity of women's sports suffered further decline' in these years.[146] For example, women's basketball went through a 'dark age' between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s as teams folded.[147] Grundy states that '[t]hroughout much of the country, visions of virile male athletes cheered on by alluring female cheerleaders, in fact, became a key component of … postwar culture'.[148] Women's role, especially in football, was predominantly on the sideline, not on the pitch. Competitive sport, especially in highly physical activities, contradicted the femininity that social norms dictated women should demonstrate. The prevailing social attitudes that women remain feminine and embrace a domestic role affected their involvement in sport. Participants played powderpuff games for fun and with minimal contact, limiting educators' concerns. Consequently, newspaper reports reveal few moral objections to women playing in public. The fact

[145] 'Pi Beta Phi Girls Win in Powder Bowl, 12-0', *New York Times*, 15 October 1951, 30.
[146] Jean O'Reilly and Susan Cahn, *Women and Sports in the United States* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2007), 12.
[147] Grundy and Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass*, 110.
[148] Grundy, 'From Amazons to Glamazons', 141.

that they were playing modified football for charitable purposes and not commercial reasons was a probable cause of this response.

Playing the sport for fun echoed the reasons young women played football in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was the result of a similar focus on separate spheres, femininity, and appropriate behaviour. The media reaction to these later games reveals journalists' more concerted effort to emphasise the young women's heteronormativity than the earlier reports. Most newspaper articles praised the female players in the 1890s and 1900s and did not sexualise them; instead, it was the players themselves who ensured that their behaviour conformed to the era's social norms. However, in the 1940s and 1950s some newspapers emphasised players' attractiveness, included female stereotypes, and highlighted games' novelty value. The young women were a source of amusement for spectators because they attempted to play a sport strongly associated with traditional masculinity. In the post-world War II years, women's opportunities to play football were primarily events to amuse spectators. Even into the 1960s, the media and entrepreneurs considered female football a joke.

Conclusion

Between 1890 and 1960, newspapers occasionally referred to women as having invaded the gridiron, their participation an antithesis to football's associated masculinity.[1] This response is understandable within the context of the sport's association with manliness at a time when there was a middle- and upper-class concern about male effeminacy.[2] In evaluating the media's reaction to female players, this work has found that newspapers responded to women's participation in a mostly positive manner. Through an analysis of newspaper articles, newsreels, and archival materials, this thesis reveals a previously hidden history. Contrary to the academic orthodoxy, these case studies show that women have had an extensive and varied history in the sport as players. For example, it is now possible to dismiss John Pettegrew's assertion that the sport's links with masculinity 'subordinated [women] to a spectatorial role' to heighten the 'heroic element of the sport'; some women wanted to play football, and they found various ways to make this happen.[3]

The primary goal of this project was to provide women with their history as football players and three central research questions underpinned this analysis:

1) How extensive was women's participation as players in American football between 1890 and 1960?

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[1] 'Hi Girls Invade Football World', *Maui News*, 15 December 1922, 5; 'Ladies of the Gridiron: A He-Man Sport Suffers a Powder Puff Invasion', *Click*, January 1940, 32; 'Kansas Girls Invade Another Male Domain', *Boston Daily Globe*, 26 September 1943, B24; 'Texas U Co-eds Invade Another Male Field', *Pampa News* (Pampa, TX), 5 October 1949, 7.
[2] Scott McQuilkin, 'Brutality in Football and the Creation of the NCAA: A Codified Moral Compass in Progressive America', *Sport History Review* 33, no. 1 (2002): 2.
[3] John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 130.

2) How did the media cover women playing American football between 1890 and 1960?
3) How did women playing American football in these years conform to wider views on gender?

Each question requires careful reflection to lead to a comprehensive conclusion. It is also essential to consider the broader implications of this work for football organisations today.

In relation to the first question, women's participation in football was extensive both geographically, and in the different ways that they found to play the sport. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women and girls played football for fun and enjoyment, often through organising casual games. Examples of these matches came from New Jersey and Washington DC in the east to Colorado in the west, Minnesota in the north, and Maryland and Alabama in the South. Similarly, the games that young women played for fun and philanthropic reasons in the 1940s and 1950s took place across the United States. Newspapers reported on matches in Florida in the south-east, Texas in the south-west, Massachusetts in the north-east, Washington in the north-west, and many states in between. Some geographical diversity is also evident in instances where female players competed either alongside male teammates or against male teams. The young women who played against male sides came from Missouri, Connecticut, and Illinois. While there were only a handful of girls who played on boys' teams, they came from across the United States, from Esther Burnham playing in Connecticut in the northeast to Frankie Groves in Texas in the south-west, and others from Kentucky, Ohio, Alabama, and Indiana. While all of these case studies demonstrate that women and girls across the country played the sport in a variety of ways, it is essential to note that football remained a minority sport. Many of these

examples are impressive, but women playing football was never a significant phenomenon.

While there was geographical diversity in some of the different ways that women played football, this was not true of the professional leagues that entrepreneurs established, the touch football games that physical educators developed, and the locations of contact teams in educational establishments. The leagues came only from California and the Midwest, and the touch football games that physical educators developed took place in only the north-east (Vassar College, Radcliffe College, and the University of New Hampshire) and Texas. Examples of women playing contact football in schools and colleges come from one state in the north-west (Idaho), two in the Midwest (Indiana and South Dakota), and one in the South (Tennessee). Educators' and university officials' concerns about football in general, and the emerging anti-competition movement in women's physical education, were probable causes of the limited number of examples of women playing contact football in this decade.

Newspaper reports also came from across the country, demonstrating widespread press interest in these games. In many cases, reports came from outside of the state in which matches took place. For example, while educators developed contact football games as part of educational programmes in four states in the 1920s, newspapers in 21 states reported these activities. This media response was likely because of the unusual nature of young women playing contact football, but it was also due to editors' use of syndicated reports from newswire services. Many stories came from the Associated Press, although individual newspapers' editors still decided which newswire articles to include, suggesting that they believed readers would be interested in these female games. Newspapers' coverage of the leagues in San Francisco, Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago was also widespread. While the locations of the competitions

were in California, Ohio, and Illinois, reports came from newspapers in 16 states, suggesting extensive editorial interest in women's football.

Analysing articles to answer the second research question reveals that rarely did the press see the women who played football as invaders. Instead, newspapers frequently praised players' ability and often treated reports of their games in the same manner as male matches. Toni Bruce's rules of media representation provided a theoretical tool in order to analyse these newspaper reports. Some reports contain evidence of her rules, although many did not. Few articles demonstrated infantilization, where the media refers to female athletes as 'girls' or 'young ladies' or by their first names, rather than their surname. This similarity to the reporting convention of male games reveals a positive journalistic response and a lack of need to emphasise the players' genders. With many examples of female football players coming from high schools, it is difficult to read too much into newspapers' use of the term 'girl'. Articles about Burnham, Groves, Agnes Rifner, and Sharon "Bobbie" Dickerson all referred to their male teammates as boys, suggesting that the use of the term girl was due to age, not infantilization.[4] Some reports referred to players as 'young ladies', but the fact that most of these young women came from the middle and upper classes explains journalists' use of the phrase. The most unequivocal evidence of infantilization comes from newsreels' use of players' first names. In the footage from Toledo, the names that the commentator used do not correspond to those in newspaper articles, suggesting that they used these names for additional comedic effect.

[4] 'Star Pivot "Man" on Junior Football Team in Connecticut is a 14-Year Old Girl', *New York Times*, 4 November 1935, 28; 'Girl Football Star Plays Just Because She Likes It', *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), 27 November 1935, 9; 'New Castle's Gal Gridder', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 31 October 1943, M18; 'Girl, 16, Plays Right Tackle, Guesses She "Got Little Rough"', *St. Louis Star and Times* (St Louis, MO), 15 November 1947, 1; 'Girl in League of 300 Boys Doing All Right', *Reno Gazette-Journal* (Reno, NV), 7 November 1957, 47.

There is little evidence of Bruce's rules of 'comparisons to men's sport' and 'sportswomen don't matter' in newspaper reports. Journalists referred to Marjorie Gilchrist, who played on the Cavour high school team in 1926, as a female Red Grange. However, the low numbers of women playing football meant a lack of female players with which to compare her. The fact that far fewer examples exist of women playing the game compared to men means that Bruce's rule of 'sportswomen don't matter', where women receive less media coverage than men, is hard to evaluate. Women playing football certainly received less coverage than male players, but this was due to the small numbers of women playing the sport and not necessarily reflective of a lack of interest.

There is more evidence of Bruce's rule of ambivalence than other rules. This style of reporting is most evident in articles that praised players for their skills but also emphasised participants' appearances and their appropriate, or stereotypical, behaviours. Newspaper reports about the 1920s contact teams in educational establishments provide evidence of this rule; articles frequently praised the players, but also mentioned their attractiveness. This coverage was similarly apparent in photographs of the 1939 league in Los Angeles that juxtaposed women's playing ability with pictures of them half-dressed or in more traditional roles like attending classes. Likewise, newspapers praised Groves for her skill but also commented on her appearance.[5] However, newspaper reports about other girls who played on boys' teams, such as Burnham and Dickerson, were free of similar comments, suggesting that, on the whole, journalists accepted these young women.

[5] 'One Texas High School Team to Have "New Look" Tonight with Girl Player', *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), 14 November 1947, 6; 'It's A She', *Vernon Daily Record* (Vernon, TX), 14 November 1947, 5.

References to players' appearances in media coverage provide unequivocal evidence of Bruce's non-sport-related aspects rule. Articles about the women who played in charitable games in the 1940s and 1950s extensively emphasised players' femininity and heteronormativity, a result of the gender conservatism of the post-World War II years. Similar comments were also evident in the newspaper reports about Rifner and Luverne Wise, the female kickers that their coaches used as novelties. Newspapers' treatment of Wise provides some evidence of Bruce's rule of sexualisation with references to her as blonde and buxom.[6] Similarly, the *Courier-Journal*'s report of the powderpuff game in South Carolina also provides evidence of sexualisation, where the accompanying photograph's angle looked up at the women from the ground.[7] While some newspaper reports sexualised a handful of players, this type of response was not widespread. The players' ages might have been part of the reason if reporters considered the girls too young to depict this way. Many of the young women who played in these games were between 14 and 16 years old, while Wise was 18. Of the 49 states in the Union in the 1940s, 27 had a legal age of consent of 16, in 20 states it was 18, while Georgia's was 14 years old, and Oklahoma did not declare an age.[8] Consequently, sexualising young women who were barely of the age of consent would have been inappropriate.

Analysis of newspaper reports of young women playing football reveals that some elements of Bruce's rule of non-sport-related aspects are not evident in articles. The rule relates to, amongst other things, highlighting other aspects of players' lives,

[6] Barnard, 'Girl Gridder Wins Lavish Praise in Football Debut', *Waco News-Tribune* (Waco, TX), 15 November 1947, 1; 'And Not in a Chorus', *Muncie Evening Press* (Muncie, IN), 18 September 1943, 9.
[7] 'Britain, Spectators Were Benefactors in Co-Ed Football', *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), 11 November 1940, 2.
[8] Children and Youth in History, 'Age of Consent Laws', http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/24 (accessed 14 July 2020).

including their relationships and personalities, at the expense of focusing on their playing. Articles did refer to players' home lives, such as the reports that stated that Bernadette Decker's father was a justice, and Burnham's father was a grocer.[9] Journalists were also keen to note that both Jacquelynn Frecka and Wise were good students.[10] Reports on men's games did not tend to use this device, and the emphasis was usually on how the team played. If an article mentioned an individual male player, it was generally because of something he did in the game, not his personal life. Thus there is a difference between some reports about female football players compared to male, but such coverage was rare.

In addition to Bruce's rules of media representation, Laura Mulvey's male gaze theory was an important theoretical tool for the analysis of photographs and drawings. A study of these images reveals that Mulvey's male gaze theory was occasionally evident. The *National Police Gazette*'s coverage is the best example of the gaze, which, according to Mulvey, projects 'its phantasy on to the female figure[s]' and objectifies the women to reduce male anxiety.[11] The drawings were a form of sensationalism and titillation for the readers who were familiar with the publication's emphasis on sex and violence. The sexualisation of the players in the South Carolina powderpuff game is also suggestive of Mulvey's theory, where the women became passive, desirous objects with the photograph drawing the viewer up the women's bare legs. The salacious reports about some female football players, including Wise and Rifner, provide evidence of fetishizing the players. Mulvey suggests that fetishizing the female body makes it 'reassuring

[9] 'Football Fatal to Girl', *New York Times*, 3 November 1905, 1; 'Esther Burnham, Female Gridder, Quits Football', *Shamokin News-Dispatch* (Shamokin, PA), 15 October 1936, 10.
[10] 'Johnny Moore's Co-Ed Grid Player', *Daily Courier* (Connellsville, PA), 24 December 1937, 8; 'Girl Passes and Place-Kicks Conversion for Boys' Team', *Wilmington Morning News* (Wilmington, DE), 23 October 1940, 22.
[11] Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 2nd edn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 19.

rather than dangerous' to male viewers.[12] Groves' comment about not smearing her lipstick was an example of Amy Godoy-Pressland's belief that women in traditionally male sports 'adopt "feminine" behaviour and styling' because of the male gaze.[13] That few pictures provide evidence of the male gaze further demonstrates that the media's response to these female players was mostly positive.

Media coverage of female football players both undermined stereotypes and occasionally maintained them. Newspapers broke down stereotypes about women's physicality simply by reporting these matches. Reporters' praise for players also demonstrates that women were able to play a violent and masculine sport without widespread concern. However, newspaper coverage also occasionally maintained stereotypes, from mentions of women pulling one another's hair, to cartoons depicting women as less able than their male counterparts. It is not possible to know why reporters included such stereotypes, but amusing sports pages' predominantly male readers and reducing their concern about women's encroachment into a masculine space would be probable reasons. Similarly, articles that emphasised some players' attractiveness reduced women's threat to the male game. Reports reminded readers that these beautiful women could not be 'proper' football players, thus maintaining the sport's usefulness as a site for proving manliness.

In relation to the third research question on the relationship between wider views on gender and women's opportunities to play football, it is clear that social norms impacted these female players. Football's association with masculinity, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, meant that women frequently found ways

[12] Ibid., 22.
[13] Amy Godoy-Pressland, '"No Hint of Bulging Muscles": The Surveillance of Sportswomen's Bodies in British Print Media', *Journalism* 17, no. 6 (2016): 754.

to demonstrate that they played the sport in an appropriate manner, including through playing in secret and modifying the rules. The 1897 league in San Francisco conformed to then-dominant social norms of working-class women taking part in physically demanding activities.[14] However, women from the middle and upper classes also played football in these years; thus, not all games replicated this class divide. In these same decades, reports of women playing against male teams demonstrate that some women contradicted traditional sporting behaviour and football's established gender order. These female players posed a real threat to masculine dominance in the sport with their ability to beat male teams, yet newspapers' responses were mostly favourable.

In the 1920s, women's participation in football echoed educators' contrasting attitudes towards women's physical activity. The only examples of women playing football in this decade were a handful of teams playing contact football in educational establishments. The fact that some physical educators in this decade encouraged women to play the contact version of football is remarkable, not only because of the sport's associated violence but also because of the anti-competition movement in women's physical education. While few female football teams existed in these years, the ones that did, validate Dave Kaszuba's statement that the decade 'saw a growing recognition and legitimization of women's physicality'.[15] However, most female physical educators continued to 'promote their brand of sedate, cooperative play'.[16] An emphasis on these types of activities explains why fewer reports of female football games exist in these

[14] Gerald Gems, Linda Borish, and Gertrud Pfister, *Sports in American History: From Colonisation to Globalisation* (Chicago: Human Kinetics, 2008), 165; Mary Lou LeCompte, 'Cowgirls at the Crossroads: Women in Professional Rodeo, 1885-1922', *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 20, no. 2 (1989): 27.
[15] Dave Kaszuba, 'Bringing Women to the Sports Pages: Margaret Goss and the 1920s', *American Journalism* 23, no. 2 (2006): 17.
[16] Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackleford, *Shattering the Glass: The Remarkable History of Women's Basketball* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 47.

years. The ambivalence in reports of female matches epitomised the conflict between those who believed that women could be more physical and the educators who promoted play days.

Women played football in various ways in the 1930s and the early 1940s, and this diversity reflected wider views on gender and differing opinions about female sporting participation in these decades. Physical educators formalised touch football in high schools and colleges, some young women played alongside male teammates, and entrepreneurs established leagues in Toledo, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Some coaches and journalists believed that girls could play football, yet the fleeting nature of young women's participation, and bans by authority figures, demonstrate that not everybody accepted their involvement. In the 1930s female physical educators 'champion[ed] physical education over varsity athletics' and this was demonstrated in their development of touch football for women and girls in high schools and colleges.[17] Women's varied participation in football coincided with a decade where 'troubling revelations about athletes who avoided study, disregarded rules of sportsmanship and accepted money from alumni' led football authorities to attempt to reform the men's collegiate game.[18] Similarly, female physical educators' concern about highly commercial sport influenced the league in Toledo, and their protests probably contributed to its demise. Entrepreneurs' development of these leagues paralleled women's movement outside of the home and into public life because of the Depression and war. Women's increasing roles outside of the home meant that playing football in front of crowds gradually became acceptable.

[17] Pamela Grundy, 'From Amazons to Glamazons: The Rise and Fall of North Carolina Women's Basketball, 1920-1960', *Journal of American History* 87, no. 1 (2000): 129.
[18] Ibid.

The examples of women playing for other people's amusement in the mid-1940s and the 1950s underscored the importance of domesticity and traditional femininity in these years. College administrators were keen to avoid any associations with feminism due to its supposed links with communism.[19] Consequently, women's efforts on the sports field, and any disruption to football's traditional gender order, could concern these authority figures. These issues explain Dickerson's very brief appearance in 1957 on an otherwise all-male pee wee football team; her participation contradicted the prevailing gender conservatism. The non-contact nature of the events, and calling many of them powder bowls, or powderpuff games, emphasised their suitability for women. Newspaper reports about the powderpuff games of the late 1940s and 1950s echoed this return to domesticity and orthodox femininity by emphasising players' beauty and female stereotypes as a means to reassure readers that the young women adhered to prevailing social norms.

Newspapers' responses to women playing football from the late nineteenth century to the post-World War II period demonstrated shifting social, scientific, medical, pedagogical, and moral and religious views on gender and sporting participation. Most of the women's football games covered in this work took place in educational establishments, although educators' changing pedagogical attitudes about appropriate sport and competition influenced their development. For example, young women played casual games in colleges and high schools between 1892 and 1905, and neither newspaper reporters nor educators expressed any discontent over these events. Similarly, some teachers in the 1920s encouraged women to play the contact game in schools. The Cavour case study, where educators differed in their opinions about whether games were interscholastic or not, illuminates one of the critical

[19] Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 2.

pedagogical issues in women's physical education: concern over how, rather than what, female students played. The 1920s also saw female physical educators deemphasise competitive sport for girls and focus on play days instead. Ethel Perrin and Grace Turner's 1929 *Play Day: The Spirit of Sport* suggested how to run these events. Recommendations included that there should be '[n]o gate money' and '[n]o publicity other than that which stresses only the sport and not the individual or group competitions'.[20] Appropriate sport for women thus needed to be free of the commercial aspects and excessive competition of male games. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, female physical educators accepted touch football as an intramural sport because it was non-contact and played within college walls, adhering to the play day philosophy. Physical education departments and student athletic associations began organising casual games. As the 1940s progressed, these intramural games gave way to formal competition, and, in the case of the University of Texas, formal tests of women's knowledge of football rules and skills. Between the late 1920s and the late 1940s, women's competitive football in education initially declined but later re-emerged with a non-contact version of the sport.

Scientific and medical beliefs about women's supposed fragility reveal another way in which women conformed to wider views on gender between 1890 and 1960. Reports from games in the 1890s and 1900s suggest that women modified the game to reduce the likelihood of injury. Medical arguments also reinforced traditional gender roles as '[t]he Victorian woman's ideal social characteristics – nurturance, intuitive morality, domesticity, passivity and affection – were all assumed to have a deeply rooted biological basis.'[21] Consequently, women's adherence to social norms when playing

[20] Ethel Perrin and Grace Turner, *Play Day: The Spirit of Sport* (New York: American Child Health Association, 1929), 17.
[21] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Women and their Role in Nineteenth-Century America', in *From Fair Sex to*

football was also arguably a medical issue. By the 1920s, some young women played the full-contact version of football in educational settings. This change signifies a shift in both educators' and the medical community's attitudes about women's physicality. As Susan Cahn notes, 'the assertive, dynamic female athlete of the 1920s posed a clear challenge to men' so women needed to appear feminine to avoid undue male concern.[22] Consequently, newspaper reports were ambivalent about women's football games in that decade. While some reporters were concerned that women might hurt themselves playing football, there is little evidence that the broader medical community was worried about female football players. For example, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* did not discuss women playing football, possibly because it was a minority sport, and they may not have been aware that games were taking place. It is also impossible to know how many women wanted to play football but did not because they were frightened of damaging their health, or because they had no opportunities thanks to educators and civic leaders, such as pee wee organisers, restricting games on health grounds.

Wider views on gender are also evident in clergymen and educators' moral and religious attitudes that impacted some women playing football. The most overt examples of these attitudes were when church leaders directly commented on women's participation. In 1897, clergymen expressed 'horror' at the proposed game by society women in Belleville, Illinois, yet in 1905 a local clergyman acted as an official for a girls' football match.[23] The ministers who prevented a 1912 game in Chicago were primarily concerned that the girls were playing on a Sunday in front of paying

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Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post Industrial Eras, ed. J.A. Mangan and Roberta Park (London: Routledge, 1987), 14.

[22] Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 51.

[23] 'Women as Foot Ball Players', *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), 27 November 1897, 6; 'Football Girls Will Play Again', *Minneapolis Journal* (Minneapolis, MN), 24 November 1905, 10.

spectators. Therefore, one moral issue relating to women's participation in football was about the impropriety of playing in highly competitive, public matches. Young women in the 1890s and 1900s played football secretly, suggesting that they were aware that playing in front of spectators was inappropriate. The perceived immorality of women playing in public was also evident in the 1930s when 'educators mandated that publicity and spectators be discouraged'.[24] This belief echoed educators' and university officials' concerns about the male game. For example, the 1929 Carnegie Foundation report into collegiate athletics criticised athletic programmes that 'had abandoned their commitment to principled amateurism [and] that commercialization and professionalism undermined the purity of the college games'.[25] Despite this concern, the media coverage of the women's football leagues in Los Angeles and Chicago suggests that as the years progressed, the press increasingly accepted women playing football in public.

While this work ends in 1960, women's participation in football remains. For example, the 1960s saw a continuation of the powderpuff games seen in the 1940s and 1950s. In the 1970s, the National Women's Football League (NWFL) emerged, including teams in Los Angeles and Toledo. While the league had three divisions by the end of the decade, it struggled in the 1980s as teams disbanded.[26] Andrew Linden's work on this league connects women's participation in these years to the 'larger revolution in women's social rank' and the 1970s' feminist movement.[27] The media treated the NWFL as a novelty by focusing on traditionally feminine attributes, much like the

[24] Merrie Fidler, *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), 19.
[25] Brad Austin, *Democratic Sports: Men's and Women's College Athletics During the Great Depression* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2015), xvii.
[26] Andrew D. Linden, 'Revolution on the American Gridiron: Gender, Contested Space, and Women's Football in the 1970s', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 18 (2015): 3.
[27] Ibid., 2.

powderpuff games of the 1940s and 1950s. For example, reporters frequently expressed their surprise that the participants were women, commented on the players' attractiveness, and highlighted the women's heteronormativity by mentioning their male partners.[28] In similarities to Groves' comment about her lipstick, some players in the NWFL highlighted their own stereotypically feminine attributes in interviews. For example, Linda Jefferson mentioned that away from the field, she wore mini-skirts.[29] However, the press' reaction to the NWFL was unlike the vast amounts of positive newspaper coverage afforded female players in the decades that this thesis has uncovered.

Following the NWFL's demise in the 1980s, it was not until the 2000s that competitive, full-contact, leagues reappeared. The Independent Women's Football League (IWFL) began in 2000 but folded in 2018.[30] While the IWFL no longer exists, women's football in the twenty-first century continues to grow. At the time of writing, the Women's Football Alliance have 69 teams competing from 33 states, the US Women's Football League currently have seven teams named on their website, and the Women's National Football Conference lists 20 teams.[31] These leagues are worthy of research, and Russ Crawford's work in this area involves interviewing female players, coaches, and those in other football roles, to create a record of female experiences.[32] Recently, the National Football League (NFL) and the National Association of Intercollegiate

[28] Ibid., 4.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Dunja Antunovic, Katie Taylor, Macauley Watt, and Andrew Linden, '"Getting Noticed, Respected, and Supported": Mediated (In)visibilities of Women's American football in the United States', in *The Professionalisation of Women's Sport: Issues and Debates*, ed. Ali Bowes and Alex Culvin (Emerald Publishing: Bingley) Forthcoming.
[31] Women's Football Alliance, 'Teams By State', http://www.wfaprofootball.com/teams-by-state/ (accessed 11 January 2020); United States Women's Football League, 'Teams', https://www.uswfl.net/copy-of-about-us (accessed 28 January 2020); Women's National Football Conference, 'Teams', https://www.wnfcfootball.com/teams (accessed 28 July 2020).
[32] Russ Crawford, 'Women Playing American Football', https://womenplayingamericanfootball.weebly.com/ (accessed 23 October 2019).

Athletics have partnered to make women's flag football an official collegiate sport, offering $15,000 to each of the first 15 colleges to join the competition.[33] While this initiative is a positive and significant step, it remains a long way from establishing women's contact football as a collegiate sport.

Legislation aimed at improving equality for women in educational establishments has done little to provide additional opportunities for women to play football. For example, Title IX, enacted by Congress in 1972 to 'prohibit sex discrimination in educational programs receiving federal support', has not assisted female football players.[34] Sarah Fields claims that 'Title IX was a paper tiger with no bite', due in part to contact sports' exemption from the legislation.[35] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano go so far as to state that 'Title IX reinforced, rather than challenged, assumptions of male superiority' because of this exclusion.[36] Fields, as well as McDonagh and Pappano, analyse case studies of young women from the 1970s onwards who fought for their right to play alongside male teammates on high school and collegiate football teams.[37] Most of the young women who went to court for the right to play football did so not under Title IX, but under the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.[38] Their decision not to use Title IX as a legal basis for inclusion in the sport further demonstrates its lack of protection for women and girls who want to play football.

Creating this history of female football players is significant for several reasons. Fundamentally, the work fills a gap in the history of women's sport in general, and that

[33] NAIA, 'Women's Flag Football', https://www.naia.org/sports/wflag/index (accessed 17 May 2020).
[34] Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate Is Not Equal in Sports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 29.
[35] Sarah Fields, *Female Gladiators: Gender, Law, and Contact Sport in America* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), vii.
[36] McDonagh and Pappano, *Playing with the Boys*, 29.
[37] Fields, *Female Gladiators*, 38-40; McDonagh and Pappano, *Playing with the Boys*, 126-134.
[38] McDonagh and Pappano, *Playing with the Boys*, 129-131.

of football in particular. This history also adds to the research on sports with high levels of physical contact that women have played. The examples of women playing football analysed here challenge the orthodox notion that the game has been a male preserve since its origins in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The work has conclusively demonstrated that women have had a varied and vibrant history in football, despite the contentions of academics such as Pettegrew and Michael Oriard.[39] This history has also confirmed the importance of ensuring that studies of women's sports, especially in niche activities, do not focus solely on formal competition. It is essential to study casual games as well as competitive matches to gain an accurate picture of the extent of women's participation in sport. In hyper-masculine sports such as football, women's participation at all, even informally, is groundbreaking and shatters stereotypes.

The examples explored here demonstrate that women from all classes took part in this highly physical sport. Gerald Gems' and Gertrud Pfister's work on boxing suggests that it was only working-class women who participated in such physical sports because for women of the higher classes '[t]heirs was a world of gentility and refinement'.[40] Similarly, Roberta Park notes that the 'late nineteenth-century "new women" were gaining modest opportunities to engage in … less physically demanding sports'.[41] Nevertheless, this work has provided examples of these middle- and upper-class women playing football that contradict these assertions and change our understanding about the activities that women from these classes enjoyed.

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[39] Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits*, 130; Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly and Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 355.
[40] Gerald Gems and Gertrud Pfister, 'Women Boxers: Actresses to Athletes – The Role of Vaudeville in Early Women's Boxing in the USA', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, no. 15 (2014): 1911, 1912.
[41] Roberta Park, 'Contesting the Norm: Women and Professional Sports in Late Nineteenth-Century America', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no. 5 (2012): 732.

New themes in physical education have also developed from this work. Much of the current research demonstrates a lack of awareness about the range of team sports that collegiate women historically played, frequently only referencing basketball, baseball, and field hockey. While authors of physical education books written in the 1920s and 1930s also mentioned soccer, volleyball, and lacrosse, they did not reference football. However, staff in physical education departments used modified football to encourage young women, especially those who may not have otherwise taken part in physical activity, to find a game that they may enjoy. The case studies highlight the seriousness with which some establishments took teaching their female students football, including, in one case, tests of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Yet other physical education histories do not mention such developments. In researching these niche sports, it is possible to challenge existing beliefs and for new accounts to emerge.

This thesis' significance should extend beyond the academic community. In establishing a narrative of women's participation in football as players, this thesis, and future publications and outreach work based on it, should encourage football organisations in the United States to promote this history and uncover more stories, as has happened in other sports. For example, in November 1988, the Baseball Hall of Fame revealed its permanent display about female baseball players. There is no similar exhibition about the history of women playing football, either at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, or elsewhere. The NFL encourages female involvement in the sport through events like the Careers in Football Forum, an initiative aimed at increasing the number of women working within the league. However, they could do more and promote the history that this work has revealed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart state that 'one of the most effective ways in which dominant groups maintain their power is by depriving the people they dominate of the knowledge of their

own history'.[42] Football authorities' apparent lack of awareness of women's historical participation in the sport is likely to be part of the reason why women do not have the same influence in football as men. Further work, including the promotion of this history by football organisations, would help resolve this issue and provide women with an understanding of their vibrant past in the sport. Greater awareness of this history can also change the belief of academics, commentators, and fans that football has always been, and remains, a site of hegemonic masculinity.

Patricia Vertinsky's comment quoted in this work's Introduction demonstrates the importance of revealing these hitherto untold stories: 'By providing a sense both of their origins and the possibility of effecting change, women's history provides an essential tool for analysing the current difficulties of women'.[43] Analysis of these case studies of female players has demonstrated how social norms, football's association with masculinity, and the sport's inherent violence, sometimes restricted women's participation. Despite these issues, some women found ways to play football, even if it was short-lived. Because these players' involvement was fleeting, little documentation remains, and thus some historians believe that women simply did not play the sport. Consequently, the story of women playing football was not there to act as an inspiration. The history set out here will hopefully encourage women to increase their involvement in football by demonstrating that the sport belongs to them as much as it does to men.

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[42] Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, 'Introduction: Gender and the New Women's History', in *Women's America Refocusing the Past*, 6th edn, ed. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.
[43] Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 2.

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Folder 10.10 Photographs Collection

PE1 Physical Education Collection

PE 14 Physical Education Collection

PE14a Physical Education Collection

Student Diaries, Digital Collection

Student Letters, Digital Collection

Wayne State University

311 Toledo Federation of Teachers

Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals

Aberdeen Daily News
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Altoona Tribune
Anniston Star
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Atlanta Constitution
Baltimore Sun
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Bismarck Tribune
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Brownsville Herald
Brownwood Bulletin
Bureau County Tribune
Burlington Daily Times-News
Cedar Rapids Republican
Chicago Daily Tribune
Chicago Sunday Tribune
Christian Science Monitor
Cincinnati Enquirer
Cleveland Plain Dealer
Click
Coe College Cosmos
College News (Wellesley)
Corsicana Daily Sun
Courier-Journal
Daily Argus-Leader
Daily Arkansas Gazette
Daily Clintonian
Daily Courier
Daily Dispatch
Daily Gate City
Daily Mail
Daily News-Journal
Daily Northwestern
Daily Republican
Daily Texan
Daily Times (New Brunswick, NJ)
Daily Times (New Philadelphia, OH)
De Kalb Daily Chronicle
Decatur Herald
Decatur Review
Deming Headlight
Denton Record-Chronicle
Detroit Free Press
Des Moines Tribune
Des Moines Register
Des Moines Sunday Register
Desert Sun
East Liverpool Review
East Oregonian
Eau Claire Leader
El Paso Herald
Endicott Daily Bulletin
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Hammond Times
Hartford Courant
Honolulu Advertiser
Independent Journal
Index-Journal
Indianapolis News
Indianapolis Star
Indianapolis Sunday Star
Interscholastic Leaguer
Jackson Daily Citizen
Joplin Globe
Journal-Times Sunday Bulletin
Judge
Kingsport Times
Lead Daily Call
Life
Logansport Pharos-Tribune
Long Beach Independent
Los Angeles Herald
Los Angeles Sunday Times
Los Angeles Times
Los Angeles Tribune
Lubbock Morning Avalanche
Mansfield News-Journal
Marble Hill Press
Marion Record
Maui News
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Medford Mail Tribune
Mexia Daily News
Milwaukee Journal
Milwaukee Sentinel
Minneapolis Journal
Minneapolis Morning Tribune
Minneapolis Star
Moline Daily Dispatch
Monroe News-Star
Montana Standard
Morning Call (Allentown, PA)
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Mount Carmel Item
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Sunday Star
Tampa Bay Times
Tampa Tribune

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The Crescent of Gamma Phi Beta
The Evening World's Home Magazine
The Express
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